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**Images of the Other, Images of the Self:  
Reciprocal Representations of the British and the Chinese  
from the 1750s to the 1840s**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature**

**University of Warwick  
Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies**

**July 2007**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the University of Warwick for granting me Warwick Postgraduate Research Fellowship to support my project from 2002 to 2004.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Susan Bassnett, for her constant encouragement, insightful criticism, and unreserved support. It is indeed a great privilege to be one of her students. I am also grateful to the secretaries of the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies of the University of Warwick, Mrs Janet Bailey (now retired), Mrs Maureen Tustin and Mrs Caroline Parker, for their continual help and hard work on my behalf.

Thanks also go to the following individuals for their help in collecting materials for me in Taiwan and United Kingdom: Kuo-shih Chen, Yi-cheng Huang, Je-hoon Lee, Chen-ying Li, Li-ying Lin, Shu-chen Ou and Chun-yi Shih.

My greatest gratitude is due to my family. I would like to thank my parents, Wen-shu Chen and Pao-chu Tsai, for their financial and spiritual supports and my sisters, Pei-pei and Hsiao-chi, for their belief in me. I would also like to thank my beloved wife, Pei-i Chou, for her complete dedication to the family and timely encouragement and understanding. My lovely son, Guan-pu, also deserves a big thank-you for being such a considerate and nice child.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their endless love and patience.

## **Declaration**

I confirm that this thesis is the author's own work and it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.



## **A Note on Transliteration**

In most cases, the system of Romanization of Chinese characters used in this thesis is the Pinyin system. All Chinese book titles, phrases and words, and almost all personal and place names have been transcribed in Pinyin.

## **Abstract**

During the interactions between the Chinese and the English from the 1750s to the 1840s, writers from both countries have created many distinctive images to represent “the Other” in their own discourses. Imagologists like Jean-Marc Moura (1992) and Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1994) indicated that every image of an “Other” *de facto* corresponds to an image of “Self.” Consequently, the reciprocal images of the British and the Chinese may not only reflect individual writer’s attitude towards “the Other” but also refract the self-images of each writer’s own people and society. As writers are more or less conditioned by their immediate society, their images of “the Other” tend to reflect the collective ideology of a society. A study of reciprocal images in their own historical milieus will enable one to see why both parties were conditioned to produce certain images to represent “the Other” and why certain images may last longer than the others or even become stereotypes in different discourses.

This thesis argues that neither the British nor the Chinese had unanimous images for each other from the 1750s to the 1840s, a century prior to the first Opium War. Instead, writers of both countries had created various negative and positive images of “the Other” to meet their own intentions during this period. By discussing the political, psychological and sociological meanings of the reciprocal images of the British and the Chinese diachronically and synchronically, this thesis suggests that writers might follow certain principles and rules to formulate their own images of other people as “the Other.”

**Keywords:** image, imagology, the Other, stereotype, Opium Wars

**Acknowledgement**

**Declaration**

**A Note on Transliteration**

**Abstract**

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### I. Motivation

This thesis aims to examine reciprocal national images of the British and the Chinese in writings of both countries from the 1750s to the 1840s. It will explore the ecology and genealogy of such images in their individual national discourses, through a discussion of origins, receptions and transformations of various images of “the Other.” Moreover, the thesis intends to explore the socio-historical significance of such images by placing them in their historical contexts. Through this image study, the thesis seeks to illustrate how writers of both countries defined themselves by representing “the Other” in particular ways and the general principles of their image creation.

The choice of this time frame is because several significant contacts between Britain and China took place and both countries changed their reciprocal images of each other dramatically during this period. For example, George Anson published his *A Voyage round the World, in the Years 1740-44* in 1748 and it tremendously changed the British public’s impressions of China. Moreover, the British government sent Lord Macartney as ambassador to visit the Chinese court in 1793 and Lord Amherst in 1816, but both failed to establish an equal diplomatic relationship with the Chinese government. As for China, the Chinese had more and more commercial and military conflicts with the British from the early nineteenth century. The first Opium War (1839-1842) not only made the Chinese realize the superiority of Western civilisation, but also made many Chinese intellectuals change their attitudes towards foreigners. It is hoped by examining the reciprocal images of the British and the Chinese from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective this thesis will provide a clear picture about how the British and the Chinese viewed

and represented each other as “the Other” in various types of text.

## II. Definition of image studies/imagology

The discipline “image studies,” or “imagologie,” was first established by Jean-Marie Carré and Marius-François Guyard as a branch of comparative literature in the 1950s. What the scholars of “image studies” wished to explore was not anything that could be roughly classified as so-called “poetic image” in the sense of traditional literary criticism, but descriptions or representations of groups or citizens of other countries found in one national philology.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the images in question may be a collection of pictures of one nation and its people who have been portrayed or represented in another nation’s literary and non-literary texts. On this, Joep Leerssen gave a specific definition of so-called image studies:

Ethnic or national stereotypes and commonplaces form the subject of an approach in literary studies called “image studies” (*imagologie* in French, Dutch and German). Image studies starts from the presupposition that the degree of truth of such commonplaces is not a necessary issue in their scholarly analysis. Imagologists tend to be extremely skeptical concerning the objective information value of such “images”, and stress the incalculable amount of suffering that such prejudices have causes (e.g. the treatment of Jews in various European countries throughout history; the treatment of supposedly “inferior” and sub-human natives in various European colonies), as opposed to their total lack of usefulness in concrete (political, economic or practical) terms.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, what imagologists want to explore is not how reality has been reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup> Meng Hua, “Bijiaowenxue xingxiangxue lunwen fanyi yanjiu zhaji” [Translations of Comparative Imagology: Papers and Research Notes], *Bijia wenxue xingxiangxue* [Imagology of Comparative Literature or Imagologie en Littérature Comparée], ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 2; Jean-Marc Moura, “Wenxue xingxiangxue yu shenhua piping: liangzhong bijiaowenxue yanjiu fangfa de jiaohui yu fenxi [Imagologie littéraire et mythocritique: rencontres et divergences de deux recherches comparatistes], trans. Duan Yinghong, *Bijiaowenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 19, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Joep Leerssen, “National Identity and National Stereotype,” *Images*, ed. Joep Leerssen, 23 Apr. 1999, U v Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 18 Nov. 2003 <<http://cf.hum.uva.nl/images/info/leers.html>>.



ethnic or national images of “the Other” or some kind of value judgment of the images in question, but how and why these ethnic and national images are presented in certain discourses and how these images may have influenced the cognitions of contemporary people or later generations. In examining the ethnic and national images of a people, imagologists need to put the images in question on a coordinate and then study their synchronic and diachronic significances. Not surprisingly, the way that imagologists study those ethnic and national images is very similar to how historians analyze texts. Leerssen once compared an imagologist to a historian with regard to their similar approaches. He suggested:

However, an imagologist would see his/her business in similar terms to those of, for instance, a historian who deals with witchcraft. It does not matter to such a historian whether witchcraft really “worked” or not; nor does it matter whether it was morally right or wrong to conjure up (effectively or ineffectively) occult forces. What matters is the belief that people vested in witchcraft, and the historically REAL consequences of that belief.

In other words: even though the belief is irrational, the impact of that belief is anything but unreal.

It is on this basis that imagologists maintain scientific hygiene when studying national stereotypes: by refusing to enter into debates about the degree of objective “validity” and by keeping a certain (necessary) amount of clinical, antiseptic distance.<sup>3</sup>

So, instead of judging the authenticity of those collected ethnic and national images in literary or non-literary discourses, imagologists closely study the intertextuality of similar ethnic and national images in different texts and then discriminate and authenticate the effects of such ethnic and national stereotypes on other contemporary or later humane discourses.

As for the term “national philology,” it includes all written and verbal

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<sup>3</sup> Joep Leerssen, “National Identity and National Stereotype.”

discourses about the ethnic or national images of the people in question. Texts like anthropological records, folklore, historical documents, literary works, paintings and political announcements are all considered as contributory discourses to this national philology. In order to illustrate the literary and historical significance of images of foreign countries and people in one nation's literary and non-literary works, an interdisciplinary approach is strongly recommended by imagologists, such as Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1989, 1995) and Jean-Marc Moura (1992).<sup>4</sup>

However, this interdisciplinary approach to image studies has been questioned. One of the most famous critics who opposed "image studies" is René Wellek, who objected to imagologists' ambition and intention of expanding the corpus and scope of literary studies. In his "The Concept of Comparative Literature" he first attacked Carré's idea of comparative literature by saying that "It seems to me that, in every way, M. Carré's concept of 'comparative literature' is obfuscating and, it if should become universal, destructive of a meaningful study of literature. It is both too narrow and too broad, falsely limited and falsely extended."<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, Wellek accused Carré of limiting comparative literature to "old factualism," contradictory to so-called "parallel studies," a strategy favoured by him and his fellow comparatists, often defined as the American school of comparative literature. On the other hand, he also disapproved of Carré's advocacy of including so many disciplines within literary studies, as this might possibly debase the importance of the study of literature in its own right and therefore marginalize comparative

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<sup>4</sup> See Daniel-Henri Pageaux, "Cong wenhua xingxiang dao jiti xingxiang wu" [De l'imagerie culturelle l'imaginaire], trans. Meng Hua, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 120 and "Xingxiangxue lilun yanjiu: cong wenxueshi dao shixue" [Recherche sur l'imagologie: de l'Histoire culturelle à la Poétique], trans. Kuai Yiping, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 198-99, 202-03; Jean-Marc Moura, "Shilun wenxue xingxiang de yanjiushi ji fangfalun" [L'Imagologie littéraire: Essai de mise au point historique et critique], trans. Meng Hua, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 20.

<sup>5</sup> René Wellek, "The Concept of Comparative Literature" *Yearbook of Comparative Literature* 2.7 (1953): 1.

literature as a sub-field of sociology or psychology.<sup>6</sup> He argued that “comparative literature in M. Carré’s sense will always be concerned only with externals, with second-rate writers, with translations, periodicals, travel books, ‘intermediaries’, all duly discussed in M. Guyard’s handbook [*La Littérature comparée*, 1951].”<sup>7</sup> As Guyard claimed that an interdisciplinary approach would do justice to those foreign images found in texts, whether they were literary or not, his arguments were consequently under fierce attack by Wellek and several other scholars,<sup>8</sup> who also cast doubt on issues like the ontological nature of literary studies might therefore be disregarded by imagologists to certain degree. To defend his philosophy of comparative literature, Wellek proposed that:

If we want to define the province of comparative literature, we must, it seems to me, start with a meaningful conception of the nature of literature and literary study. I have argued many times that “literature” must be interpreted as “imaginative literature” as otherwise we arrive at the study of all printed matter, of all cultural history. If we recognize this we must say that the comparative psychoanalysis of national myths demanded by M. Carré and Guyard is not a part of literary scholarship, but a subject belonging to sociology or general history. . . . “Comparative literature” cannot be satisfied with being a sub-discipline investigating data about the foreign reputations of writers. The concept propounded by Messrs. Carré and Guyard carries us, on the one hand, back into the old days of positive fragmentations, and on the other, abolishes the clear subject matter of our study in favor of sociology and national psychology.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, by claiming literary scholarship as a key feature which differentiates literary

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<sup>6</sup> Wellek, “Concept” 4.

<sup>7</sup> Wellek, “Concept” 2.

<sup>8</sup> Comparatists like Henry H. H. Remak (1961), A. Owen Aldridge (1964) and René Etiemble (1966) also criticized image studies for different reasons. See Susan Bassnett’s *Comparative Literature* (1993), 31-32 and Li Xinde’s “Bijiaowenxue faguoxuepai jiqi xinfazhan” [French School of Comparative Literature and Its New Achievements], *Wenzhou Normal College Journal* 24.4 (2003): 39-41.

<sup>9</sup> Wellek, “Concept” 4-5.

research from other fields of humane studies, Wellek spoke sternly to defy Carré and Guyard's suggestion of examining foreign images in different literary and non-literary discourses on an interdisciplinary basis. He assumed the proposal of the latter might possibly turn literary texts into raw material for psychological or sociological research.

On Wellek's remarks against Carré and Guyard's theories of image studies, Hugo Dyserinck concluded that:

... the study of "image" and "mirages" has at the time been violently attacked by René Wellek and some of his followers respectively epigones, in the context of the French-American fight between comparatists, concerning our methods of research. Exactly the interdisciplinary possibilities and ambitions of imagology, he did not like at all. For him this was "rather a study of public opinion useful, for instance, to a program director in the Voice of America." Or more in earnest: It was "national psychology, sociology . . ." and so on. As a matter of fact, he did not want to recognize the legitimacy of such research as part of a larger concept of the study of literature. The basis of these negative statements was lying, of course, in Russian Formalism and in the principles of New Criticism and the so-called "intrinsic study of literature."<sup>10</sup>

From the previous comment we know that what Wellek wanted to do was to draw a boundary to define so-called studies of literature and literariness and then to defend this territory. He did not think a lenient "interdisciplinary" approach would bring studies of literature any benefit. Furthermore, a loosely-defined "interdisciplinary" approach to image studies might distract literary scholars from working on literary texts and direct their attention to extrinsic studies, such as the reception of certain pieces of literature in foreign countries and the intertextuality between literature and

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<sup>10</sup> Hugo Dyserinck, "Imagology and the Problem of Ethnic Identity," *Intercultural Studies* 1 (2003 Spring) 11 Nov 2003 <<http://www.intercultural-Studies.org/ICS1/Dyserinck.shtml>>.

history or between literature and other non-traditional literary works, such as memoirs and posters.

However, obviously, both Carré and Guyard did not want to limit the studies of literature exclusively to textual analysis of traditional literary texts. Instead, they wished to create a dialogical milieu for literary studies and other disciplines, such as anthropology, ethnology, philology, philosophy, political science, semiology and socio-psychology. They believed such dialogism would not only enrich literary studies, but also effectively bridge different disciplines of human science with a common research motif—the re/presentation of “the Other(s).” As this motif—the re/presentation of the Other(s)—can be detected in some of the discourses mentioned above, Carré and Guyard argued that an interdisciplinary methodology would help imagologists to explore the sociopolitical significance of ethnic and national images as fully as possible. In other words, for the purpose of excavating the often concealed meanings of literary texts, especially the mysterious significance of certain ethnic and national images or mirages, it would be necessary for imagologists to examine literary texts in their individual social contexts with the help of different yet appropriate methodologies.

In addition to advocating an interdisciplinary approach, other imagologists like Alexandru Dutu (1976), Michel Cadot (1983) and Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1994) also suggested that more non-traditional literary texts like biographies, encyclopedias, histories, interviews, literary histories, movies, newspapers, paintings, sculptures and travel writing should be examined.<sup>11</sup> They suggested that the reception and dissemination of certain national images could be better understood if these

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<sup>11</sup> See Alexandru Dutu, “Moshi, xingxiang, bijiao” [Modèles, image, comparaisons], trans. Li Huachuan, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing UP, 2001) 95; Michel Cadot, “Xingxiang yanjiu” [L’étude des images], trans. Li Guangli, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing UP, 2001) 107-08; Pageaux, “Cong wenhua xingxiang dao jiti xingxiang wu” 120, 129-30.

non-literary texts were also studied, like any other literary texts.

This openness in research methodology and comprehensiveness of data has proven beneficial to literary studies of ethnic or national images. To some extent, it not only offers scholars of literature, imagologists in particular, a new perspective, but also stimulates scholars in other fields, such as historians and sociologists, to re-examine those established value systems about “the Other.”

### III. Practice and scope of image studies

Since image studies were first proposed by Carré and Guyard in the 1950s, their practice and scope has been modified over last few decades. New disciplines have been introduced, while scholars, such as Joep Leerssen (1997), suggested that factors like genres, narrative strategies of individual authors, themes and text types should be taken into consideration.<sup>12</sup> In other words, it is suggested that imagologists should choose appropriate disciplines to decipher the multifaceted meanings of ethnic or national images according to the nature and types of texts being examined.

Even though the methodology for image studies has been modified by various scholars, the basics of image studies have not changed too dramatically since the 1950s. The stages of doing an imagological study can be simply summarized, in Pageaux’s terms, as follows: the lexical, the narrative and the thematic elements.<sup>13</sup>

What is a lexical stage then? In order to justify the existence of certain ethnic or national images or stereotypes in the texts of an individual writer or a number of writers of the same nationality or ethnicity, imagologists first need to collect and categorize several identifiable lexicons that contribute to the images in question.

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<sup>12</sup> Nora Moll, rev. of *L'immagine dell'altro e l'identità nazionale: Metodi di ricerca letteraria*, Supplement to Number 24 of *Il Confronto Letterario* (1997), ed. M. Beller, 20 Nov. 2003 <[http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/literary\\_research-ef/n28-n36/old29/nmoll.htm](http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/literary_research-ef/n28-n36/old29/nmoll.htm) >

<sup>13</sup> See Pageaux, “Cong wenhua xingxiang dao jiti xingxiang wu” 130

As mechanical as this may seem, this stage of locating and categorizing vocabularies, usually adjectives or adjectival modifiers, is nevertheless significant to distinguish whether an ethnic or national image is original or repetitive, popular or exceptional, personal or collective, synchronic or diachronic and positive or negative.

After successfully building up a checklist of vocabularies for preliminary image classification, the reason why certain vocabularies were chosen by an author or a number of authors to narrate images of “the Others” can be examined. This stage is called narrative analysis. Through this, a discussion of the extent to which these lexicons reflect a power relationship between narrator and the narratees as well as the self-images of a narrator can be studied. In other words, the antithetical relationship between narrators and narratees, the observers and the observed or even the presenters and the represented can be debated and illustrated through narrative analysis.

The third stage is a comparative study of the results of any lexical and narrative analysis with texts from other fields. The purpose of this is to examine the sociological and historical significance of ethnic or national images from a macroscopic perspective. The images constructed in literary texts may correspond to or contradict with other discourses such as anthropological accounts, cultural histories, national economic reports, folklore, political propaganda or reports of socio-psychological analyses. A large-scale thematic survey of images in different discourses could offer a more complete picture of the images in question.

In order to illustrate how an image study can be undertaken, let us consider Edward W. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) as an example to further explain the three stages mentioned above. In the first section of the first chapter “Knowing the Oriental,” Said summarizes a list of vocabularies used by two British politicians, who were also well-known Orientalists, Arthur James Balfour and Lord Cromer, to

describe the people of Egypt and their cultural and psychological traits. He then highlights the antithetical power relationship between the image presenters, the British officials of Egyptian affairs, and the subjects, the colonized Egyptians:

Many terms were used to express the relation: Balfour and Cromer, typically, used several. The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”, thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal.” But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental’s world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West.<sup>14</sup>

Here in this passage Said, on the one hand, provides his readers with a number of terms to recall images of the Egyptians presented to the English public in literary and political discourses of the early twentieth century by examining Evelyn Baring Cromer’s *Modern Egypt* (1908) and Balfour’s parliamentary speech given on June 13, 1910. On the other hand, applying Foucault’s theory of knowledge and power, Said moves to interpret the connotations of those sets of antitheses which revealed the political relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

After elucidating the political relativism of the British colonizers and the subjected Egyptians, Said then examines the negative images of the Egyptians present in many classic or canonical literary and non-literary texts by British and French authors and then suggests that there was some kind of unity and synchronicity in these European images of Egyptians. The texts he investigates include Alexander William Kinglake’s *Eothen* (1844), Richard Burton’s *Personal*

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<sup>14</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978, New York: Vintage, 1994) 40.



*Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah* (1893), Napoleon I's ambitious encyclopedia about Egypt *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française, publié par les orders de sa majesté l'empereur Napoléon le grand* (1809-28), Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1863), *Le Tentation de Saint Antoine* (1874) and Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1884). This intertextual examination of images in different European discourses, in one way, demonstrates the characteristic of synchronicity of certain British and French images of the Egyptians; in another way, it displays the diachronic development of British and French images of the Egyptians in their national discourses respectively. By cross-examining these negative images, Said displays how they were produced, then evolved to be strengthened and consumed by European writers, later becoming stereotyped in individual literary or non-literary discourses. Hence, from the previous example we can follow Said's narrative to see how he accomplishes a significant image study of the ethnic and national images of Egyptians in European discourses.

Before this thesis begins to discuss the reciprocal ethnic and national images of the British and the Chinese from the 1750s to the 1840s, one thing needs to be emphasized. When an imagologist starts to work on ethnic or national images of a nation or tribe in question, he or she needs to keep in mind that it is not the "reality" of images that he or she is after, but the "reception" and "circulation" of such images. On the one hand, it is out of consideration of the nature of literature—fictional, imaginative and poetic, on the other hand, it is due to the ultimate purpose of image studies—to see how ethnic or national images are "textualized" and further "intertextualized" by individual writer or groups of writers in different times and spaces. On this characteristic of image studies, Leerssen states:

In actual practice this means that, in studying national stereotypes and alleged “national characters” or national reputations, an imagologist is not concerned with the question *whether that reputation is true*, but *how it has become recognizable*. That interest (not in “truthfulness” but in “recognizability”) means that images are studies, not as items of information about reality, but as *properties of their context*.<sup>15</sup>

He then uses a hypothetical statement “British are individualists” as an example and reminds readers to ask themselves several questions regarding this hypothesis.

Who is saying this? What audience is the author addressing? Why is it important for this author to make this point? What are the political circumstances at the time this text was written? How does the author attempt to convince the reader of the validity of his claim? How does this image of British individualism fit into the text as a whole—and what sort of text is it anyway: an essay, or a novel, or a poem?<sup>16</sup>

Hence, instead of pursuing “truthfulness,” what imagologists wish to explore are issues like personal and collective contributions to certain ethnic or national images, political implications of those ethnic or national images, intertextuality of images and distributions of images in different genres and texts. The study covers various aspects of images: such as lexicons and narratives, the ecology of images (life and death of images in different genres and discourses) and their socio-political significance.

#### **IV. An overview of image studies of China and the Chinese in English Literature**

The study of images of China and the Chinese in English and world literature has won many scholars’ attention in recent years.<sup>17</sup> In these works scholars of

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<sup>15</sup> Leerseen, “National Identity and National Stereotype.”

<sup>16</sup> Leerssen, “National Identity and National Stereotype.”

<sup>17</sup> These include William W. Appleton’s *A Cycle of Cathay: The Chinese Vogue in England during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1951), Raymond Dawson’s *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Concepts of Chinese Civilization* (1967), Nigel Cameron’s *Barbarians and*

different generations have shown us how divergently China and the Chinese were perceived and represented by individual foreign writers at different times. Though we have dozens of books, dissertations and articles dedicated to the study of British or European perceptions and presentations of China and the Chinese, only a few of them can be classified as image studies from the perspective of comparative imagology.<sup>18</sup> There are several reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, many authors of these studies were more concerned with how the Chinese culture was appreciated and evaluated by the Westerners than how the Chinese were presented as an Other in western writings. Their researches tended to focus on the visibility of Chinese culture in Western contexts and the westerners' responses to it. Consequently, what they had achieved was to identify the various influences of Chinese culture on Western people, both intellectually and physically. Here Appleton's work can be viewed as an example of this type of study. Secondly, even

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*Mandarins: Thirteenth Centuries of Western Travelers in China* (1970), Colin Mackerras's *Western Images of China* (1989), J. A. G. Roberts' *China through Western Eyes: The Nineteenth Century* (1991), *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1998) edited by Adrian Hsia, Zhang Longxi's *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China* (1998), Nicholas Koss's *The Best and Fairest Land: Images of China in Medieval Europe* (1999), Wu Mengxue's *Ming qing shiqi ouzhouren yanzhong de zhongguo* [European's Vision of China in Ming and Qing Dynasties] (2000), Zhou Ning's *Yongyuan de wutuobang: Xifang de zhongguo xingxiang* [Utopia forever: Western images of China] (2000) and Ge Guilu's *Wu wai de yuan yin—Yingguo zuojia yu zhongguo wenhua* [Distant Voices beyond London: English Writers and Chinese Culture] (2002) and *Tazhe de yanguang: Zhong-Ying wenxue guanxi lungao* [The Others' Perspectives] (2003), Jiang Zhiqin's *Wenxue xingxiang yu wenhua liyong* [Literary Imagination and Cultural Utilization] (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Of all the writers listed above, Mackerras, Koss, Zhou Ning, Ge Guilu and Jiang Zhiqin all have more or less dealt with Western images of China and the Chinese from an imagological perspective, though Ge and Jiang are probably the only ones who showed awareness of the discipline of imagology. In the introduction to his book, Mackerras stated that "An image is a view or perception held by a person or group. In the present context, however, it is more specifically a perception which holds sufficient priority with the viewer to impinge upon the consciousness. . . . One aim *not* within the scope of this book is the presentation of the reality of China. Though I have tried to handle the images critically, I have not normally commented on who is 'right' or 'wrong' when observers present rival or conflicting views. Images are not and have never been necessarily the same as reality. . . . What all observers of China appear to have done is to filter what they see through the spectacles of their own backgrounds, ideologies, biases, and experiences. It is a nearly universal, and perfectly understandable and natural, pattern for observers of another people to remain firmly planted in their own culture." Similar awareness can also be found in the works of Ge and Jiang. See Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford UP, 1991) 2-3, Ge, *Tazhe de yanguang: Zhong-Ying wenxue guanxi lungao* [The Others' Perspectives] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 2003) 267-68, Jiang, *Wenxue xingxiang yu wenhua liyong* [Literary Imagination and Cultural Utilization] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 2005) 3, 8-9.

though many scholars have successfully identified images of the Chinese in the works of a specific Western writer or even a group of Western writers, they did not go further to discuss the intertextual links of images between different works. Several articles collected in Adrian Hsia's *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1998) and Robert's *China through Western Eyes: The Nineteenth Century* can be regarded as examples of this kind of study. Thirdly, some scholars, especially the historians, have focused on the changes of European images of the Chinese as reflected in historical documents of different eras. They did not pay much attention to the images of the Chinese as depicted by European men of letter. As a result, their studies tended to overlook the contribution of contemporary literary works in producing and shaping certain images of the Chinese as an Other. For example, Wu Mengxue's *Ming qing shiqi ouzhouren yanzhong de zhongguo* could serve as a good example to see how China and the Chinese were presented in diverse historical works by the Europeans. Hence, except for a few articles and books that can be considered as examples of imagological studies of the ethnic and national images of China and the Chinese, such as the works of Ge, Jiang, Koss, Zhang and Zhou, most academic studies of images of the Chinese in English or European discourses cannot be classified as image studies in the sense defined above.

## **V. An overview of image studies of Britain and the British in Chinese Literature**

Comparatively speaking, the time when Chinese writers started to depict images of the British and their country is much later than when the British writers started to present the Chinese and their country in their works. Many facts contributed to this situation. First of all, Britain was first known to the Chinese in the early seventeenth century, when her name and geographical location were

introduced to the Chinese elites and literati by Matteo Ricci in his *Kunyu wanguo quantu* [Map of the World] in 1602.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, during the last two imperial dynasties of China, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 AD), the Chinese public had very limited information about the ascending British Empire and her people because strict information control and censorship about other countries was upheld by the Chinese imperial officials for security reasons. Thirdly, even though some information about the British was available to the Chinese public, it either circulated only in the south-eastern provinces of China, where the British were allowed to trade with the representatives of Chinese merchants “Hong shang,” or was publicized by imperial edict or imperial announcements, in which the British were often mentioned without much detailed information. Fourthly, due to the geographical restrictions of the Chinese Empire, Chinese writers had few chances to meet people from the other side of their natural boundaries and therefore they seldom fictionalized foreigners in their works of imagination. For all these reasons, Chinese writers seldom created characters from Europe in literary works before the Opium Wars. Even if some cases could be found in odd passages, the images of the foreigners tended to be realistic descriptions of genuine characters, instead of personae out of imagination or fantasy. That is to say, when writers of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties mentioned foreigners in their works, it was rather “realistic” not “fictional” traits that contributed to the characterization of such personae. On this characteristic of classic Chinese literature, Meng once remarked that:

What is notable is that most of the early descriptions of Westerners  
by Chinese people come from sketches, travel notes and other

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<sup>19</sup> For more on the Chinese early knowledge about Britain see Gong Yingyan’s “Yapian zhanaheng qian zhongguoren dui yingguo de renshi” [Chinese’s Knowledge about Britain before the Opium Wars], *Dongxi jiaoliu luntan*, ed. Hung Shijian (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1998) 230-64.

sub-literary works, and not from fictional works. In these works the imaginative and the descriptive intermingle. In them, the image of the foreign is not merely a reproduction of reality; rather, the image has been re-organized and written according to the cultural models and processes of the viewer. But it was precisely because Chinese people were striving to present the “reality” they perceived that the images developed into ones of alterity which gradually transformed their understanding of the outside world.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, images of foreigners in general were seldom found in works of classical Chinese literature but usually appeared in works of para-literature, such as travel notes, political or religious pamphlets, sketches or illustrations during the early stages of Sino-European encounters of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Elsewhere, Meng also suggests that by studying these images of foreigners as a whole through appropriate interdisciplinary methodology, we will be able to understand what kind of self-images were projected by the Chinese writers and what kind of cultural and political forces might be involved in the representations of foreigners as “the Others.”<sup>21</sup>

In her editorial to *Bijiaowenxue xingxiangxue* [Imagologie en literature comparée] Meng highlights the fact that the French term “imagologie” has yet to be admitted in the corpus of literary terminology and there is no English equivalent of this term in any dictionary.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere she also pointed out that if one checks the bibliographic databases of major libraries around the world, one will immediately get a clear picture that “the image of Westerners [or foreigners in general] in Chinese literature has been virtually untouched as an academic subject.”<sup>23</sup> Except for those few articles collected in Meng and Sukehiro’s *Images of Westerners in Chinese and*

<sup>20</sup> Meng Hua, preface, *Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese Literature*, trans. Christopher Buckley, eds. Meng Hua and Sukehiro Hirakawa (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000) 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Meng, preface, *Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese Literature*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Meng Hua, editorial, *Bijaiwenxue xingxiangxue* [Imagologie en literature comparée], ed. Hua Meng (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 1.

<sup>23</sup> Meng, preface, *Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese Literature*, 10.

*Japanese Literature* (2000), there are only a few doctoral dissertations or articles ever examined the topic in question. Among these doctoral dissertations we have Danny Shiu-Lam Paau's *Visions of Civilization: National Images of England and France among Chinese Journalists, 1895-1919* (1979), Margaret John Baker's *Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Linshu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation* (1997) and Nan-Tsung A Kim's *The Neighbour as Mirror: Images of Korea in Chinese Writings 1876-1931* (1999). Even in the collection *Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese Literature*, strictly speaking, only Zhaorong Peng's "The Image of the 'Red-Haired Barbarian' in Chinese Official and Popular Discourse," Hua Meng's "The Chinese Genesis of the Term 'Foreign Devil,'" Rumin Wen's "The Image of Westerners in the Gaze of Cultural Criticism" and Hengda Yang and Peng Chen's "Images of Westerners in the Chinese Novel since the 1980s" can be regarded as examples of so-called image studies advocated by European theorists of imagology as other articles listed here are not dealing with the ethnic or national images of foreigners in Chinese literature.

## VI. Summary

In comparison with research into the ethnic and national images of China and the Chinese in English literature, research into images of Britain and the British in Chinese literature is even less developed. Given the absence of research in this field, this thesis proposes to re-examine the construction of British images of China and the Chinese and vice versa, from a more macroscopic perspective and then to discuss the ecology and genealogy of these images, which were often mixed with an exotic element of different degrees.

The thesis will first analyse images of individual writers separately. The

purpose of this is to locate the basic elements—vocabularies, adopted by individual writers and to see which images had been constructed by them. Intertextual relationship between works will also be discussed if evidence, such as diaries, memoirs, notes, collections, letters, or direct references in works, strongly suggested that an author consulted works by others. Next, the thesis will classify the images being identified and examine their frequency in contemporary works. This analysis will enable one to see the ecology and genealogy of individual images. Last, the images will be examined against their immediate historical background to illustrate their diachronic and synchronic significance. The focus of this analysis will be identifying the factors that may support or subvert an existing image. It is hoped that through these analyses one will have a better picture of the reciprocal images of the Chinese and the English from the 1750s to the 1840s, a century before the relationship between two countries reached its lowest point.



## Chapter Two

### Images of the Chinese in Early European Literary Texts: Marco Polo and John Mandeville

#### I. A historical review of early texts about China

Before Lord George Macartney and his embassy brought extensive first-hand information back to Britain in 1794, early materials about the Chinese and their empire available in Britain can be roughly categorized into three groups. The first group refers to the records of journeys left by early British or other European adventurers, the second to the numerous letters and reports written by early Continental Jesuit missionaries, the third to the imaginative stories by authors of literary works.

There are several travellogues available to British readers before the mid-eighteenth century, such as *History of the Mongols* (1247) by John of Plano Carpini,<sup>1</sup> *The Journey of William of Rubruck* (1255) by William of Rubruck,<sup>2</sup> *Travels*<sup>3</sup> (c. 1298) by Rustichello of Pisa who recorded the story, attributed to Marco Polo, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (hereafter referred as *Mandeville's Travels*) (1357) by

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<sup>1</sup> Carpini's work was later reproduced in Vincent of Beauvais' thirteenth-century encyclopedia *Speculum Maius* (1256-1259), which was translated into five European languages and remained popular through the Renaissance. See Nicholas Koss, *The Best and Fairest Land* (Taipei: Bookman, 1999) 38. Besides, a book called *The Travels of John de Plano Carpini and Other Friars into Tartary, in the Year 1246* was collected in the fourth volume of *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting of the Most Esteemed Relations, which Have been Hitherto Published in Any Language; Comprehending Everything Remarkable in Its Kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America*, published in London in 1745. See *British Library: Integrated Catalogue*, 25 Dec. 2005<<http://catalogue.bl.uk/>>.

<sup>2</sup> This work was translated into English by W. Woodville Rockhill in 1900 and entitled *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55*.

<sup>3</sup> The first English translation of Polo's account was by John Frampton in 1579. When quoting Polo's account of the Chinese, I would like to use Ronald Latham's *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1958, hereafter *Travels*), which reproduces the essences of the manuscripts F and Z and includes much significant information from other less reliable MSS. F refers to the Paris manuscript, where it is generally believed Polo's words are best preserved; while Z refers to the Latin manuscript, which is a literal translation of Rustichello's narrative "in an older and fuller form than that represented by F." See Roland Latham, *Travels* 24-25. For more discussions about the authenticity issue of Polo's account, see Yule and Cordier, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: Dover, 1993) 80-104; John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 105-15 and Wood, *Did Marco Polo go to China?* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995) 43-48.

a mysterious author named John Mandeville<sup>4</sup> and *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia* (1763) by a Scottish physician called John Bell.<sup>5</sup> As for those missionary accounts, *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation thereof* (1585)<sup>6</sup> by Juan González de Mendoza, *Memoirs and Observations Made in a Late Journey through China* (1697) by Louis Le Comte<sup>7</sup> and *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary, together with the Kingdoms of Korea, and Tibet* (1735)<sup>8</sup> by Jean-Baptiste Du Halde were popular among contemporary European literati who were interested in China or the Orient in general. With regard to English literature, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) by Robert Burton (1577-1640), *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe (c. 1660-1731), several essays by Sir William Temple (1628-1699), and *The Citizen of the World* (1762) by Oliver Goldsmith (c. 1728-1774) all contributed various fictional features to shape British readers' images of the Chinese.

As there were not many direct contacts made by people of Britain and China before the Macartney embassy visited China in 1793 and only a small number of English texts about China were available to British readers, it is common to see inter-textual links among the aforesaid works. That is to say, earlier narrations about the Chinese were often borrowed or modified by later writers to meet their

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<sup>4</sup> The authorship of this narrative has been questioned by many scholars over hundreds of years. The extant manuscripts were divided into two general groups, the Insular version and the Continental version. The former refers to those manuscripts which were emanated from England, while the latter refers to those ones from Belgium and France. Scholars have found three distinctive Middle English translations of French Continental versions so far and named them the Defective version, the Cotton version and the Egerton version. All of them are likely available to readers no later than 1430. For more information about the authorship and the availability of these three Middle English translations, see Koss 143-49, 165-68.

<sup>5</sup> Bell joined a Russian embassy to China, dispatched by Peter the Great, in 1720 and came back to St. Petersburg in 1722. More than forty years later, he published his itinerary in 1763, one year after Oliver Goldsmith published his *The Citizen of the world*.

<sup>6</sup> An English translation is produced by Robert Parke in 1588.

<sup>7</sup> An English version of the book appeared in the same year and an extensively corrected edition subsequently published in 1698. This book is one of the main sources of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*.

<sup>8</sup> The English translation of this work appeared in 1741.

individual intentions of composition or even personal interests. For instance, in his “Democritus to the Reader” Robert Burton reproduces a well-known hearsay regarding the arrogance of the Chinese that “[t]he Chinese say, that we Europeans have one eye, they themselves two, all the else is blind” and this adage can be traced back to *Mandeville’s Travels*<sup>9</sup> in the fourteenth century and other works.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter is to review various literary sources of British images of the Chinese before the 1750s, so I will target several early literary works, either written in English or translated into English, in my following discussion. Furthermore, I will also consider some prototypical images of the Chinese in the light of their historical significance. Works to be examined will comprise a variety of genres, including caricatures and paintings. By comparing the early images with the later ones, I wish to study the diachronic and synchronic significances of Chinese images in different narratives.

As suggested by William W. Appleton, British readers’ interest in China was amused by the translations of Marco Polo’ *Travels* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*,<sup>11</sup> whence they scraped fragmentary images of a people, generally

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<sup>9</sup> This book is originally attributed to an English knight from St Albans, called John Mandeville. He claims to have left his country in 1322 and traveled extensively in the East for thirty four years, eight years longer than Polo had spent on his China journey. He died in 1371 and was buried in Liege. This information about the life of the author is noted in the original prologue of the book. For additional information about the identity of the author, see P. Hamelius, *Mandeville’s Travels, Translated from the French of Jean D’Outremeuse*, vol. 1 (London, Oxford UP, 1919) 1-5.

<sup>10</sup> In *Mandeville’s Travels* we read “they say themselves, that they see with two eyes and the Christian men see but with one, because that they be more subtle than them. For all other nations, they say, be but blind in cunning and working in comparison to them.” See A. W. Pollard’s *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: The Version of the Cotton Manuscript in Modern Spelling* (London: Macmillan, 1900) 143. Similar description can also be found in *History of Hayton*, written by Prince Geoigos Hayton in 1307, in which we read “[t]here are in that kingdom of Cathay more marvelous and singular things than in any other kingdom of the world. The people of the country are exceedingly full of shrewdness and sagacity, and hold in contempt the performances of other nations in every kind of art and science. They have indeed a saying to the effect that they alone see with two eyes, whilst the Latin see with one, and all other nations are blind! By this you may easily gather that they look on all other nations as quite uncivilized in comparison with themselves.” See Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1915) 258-59.

<sup>11</sup> William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay: The Chinese Vogue in England during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia UP, 1951) 5-6. The first English translation of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* was published in 1499; however, there were several English

known as the inventors of intricate silk designs.<sup>12</sup> What kind of images were shaped by these early texts, and to what extent were these images reshaped, even regenerated by later British writers are questions to pose, in addition to asking what was the general reception of these two works over the centuries. One way of approaching these questions is to consider the language used in these early texts to describe China and the Orient.

## II. Images of China and the Chinese in Marco Polo's *Travels*

### A. General questions about Polo's *Travels*

Ever since Marco Polo's *Travels* (*Le divisament dou monde*, or *Description of the World*) was completed around 1298, the credibility of the book and its authors has been continually questioned.<sup>13</sup> Polo's nickname Messer Marco Million, which

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manuscripts circulating in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. By the end of the seventeenth century, there were as many as nine English versions available. See Appleton 5 and Koss 165-68.

<sup>12</sup> The earliest name for the Chinese in western works is *Seres*, people who produce silk. Early Latin poets like Virgil, Propertius, Ovid, Horace and Silius Italicus all have references to the *Seres* in their individual works. However, except for Horace, who regards the *Seres* as warlike people, all the other writers mentioned here associate the *Seres* with silk and tended to present the Chinese positively. For more specific references to the Chinese left by these early Latin writers, see Mackerras 15, Koss 19-21.

<sup>13</sup> One of the most famous scholars who do not believe Marco Polo visited China is probably Frances Wood, the head of the Chinese Department at the British Library. In her *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*, she argues that several distinctive Chinese customs like the practice of foot-binding among women from rich families, the technique of printing, the habit of drinking tea and the usage of chopsticks are not mentioned by scrutinous Polo, nor does he mention the Great Wall. Besides, no single Chinese record can be found up to date to prove Polo ever served as a special emissary to the Great Khan, given the fact that the Chinese bureaucrats often stun modern researchers by documenting nearly everything. If he did serve at the court of the Great Khan and accomplished something important for him, such as governing the city of *Yangzhou* for three years by the order of Great Khan and accompanying a Mongol princess to Persia to be the wife of Arghun Khan of Persia on his way back to Venice, Chinese historians should not have missed him in their much-acclaimed detailed accounts. Other problems like the inconsistent narrative perspective of the book, numerous geographical errors made by Polo, the coincidental parallels detected in Polo's book and Rashid al-Din' (1247-1317) *World History* (*Jāmi 'al-Tawārīkh*, also known as *History of the World*), and Polo's preference for Persian and Arabic spellings of geographical sites also lead Wood to question the veracity of Polo's travel. She therefore concludes "[t]he details of the Prologue, particularly those describing the first trip of Niccolo and Maffeo Polo, suggest a credible venture, whilst the rest of the text is a mixture of legend and geographical and historical description which hangs together in a quite different way. I think it quite likely that the elder Polos traveled a long way across the deserts of Central Asia, like William of Rubruck and John of Plano Carpini, perhaps to Karakorum or a Mongol encampment nearby, and returned, protected by the gold safe-conduct tablets of one of the Mongol leaders. Marco's participation and the whole second trip seems unlikely, even allowing for exaggeration" (148-49). Besides, she also suggests Polo, if there is such a Polo, might have had

implies he liked to use the term “millions” to describe the great wealth of the Mongol Khan and his subjects in Cathay and Manzi, reflects his questionable reputation as a trustworthy storyteller. Indeed, many of his stories about his unusual experiences in Central and East Asia were simply too bizarre to be true to his contemporaries, who were mostly ignorant of the life styles of the inhabitants from the other side of the Euro-Asian continent. It is no wonder that Polo was implored by his friends to recant the fictional parts of his account on his death-bed.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, his account of the Orient inspired many adventurers and cartographers across Europe in the following centuries and it is generally considered an important reference book about Central and East Asia. For instance, Abraham Cresques’s *Catalan Atlas* (1375) and Fra Mauro’s *Mappamundi* (1457-9) are both believed to be partly based on Polo’s geographical account.<sup>15</sup> Besides, it is noted by many scholars that, on his assumed westward voyage to Asia in 1492, which ended up America, Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) brought a Latin edition of Marco

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some access to several contemporary Persian or Arabic travel guidebooks on Central and Eastern Asia and then based upon these resources to fabricate his astonishing story with Rustichello when both of them are imprisoned in Genoa in 1298 (145-46). Herbert Franke also noted many similarities between Ibn Batuta’s [also known as Abu-Abdullah Mahomed] *Travels of Ibn Batuta in Asia and Africa, 1325-1355* and Polo’s *Travels* and suggests that the latter might have made up his itinerary upon some Persian or Arabic guidebooks. However, Franke and Wood’s arguments were severely challenged by Yang Zhijiu, Huang Shijian and Gong Yingyan. They suggest that, though there are many fallacies and mistakes in Polo’s book, most of Polo’s accounts are proven to be genuine and many things that Polo mentioned correspond with Chinese historical texts and could not be found in any other extant non-Chinese text. They also suggest that Polo’s view is extensively restricted by his identity as a foreign businessman, the people he associated with and the places he visited. Hence, it is unreasonable to discredit Polo’s account simply because he fails to mention a small number of things which are considered as typical to the Chinese. For more discussions about the debates over the authenticity of Polo’s book, see Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1995); Yang Zhijiu, “Zai lun Makepoluoshu de zhenwei wenti” [Second thought on the authenticity of Marco Polo’s book], *Lishi yanjiu* 2 (1994): 72-78, “Makepoluo daoguo zhongguo—dui Makepoluo daoguo zhongguo ma? de huida” [Marco Polo had been to China—A response to *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*], *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (1997): 106-22; Huang Shijian and Gong Yingyan, “Makepoluo yu wanlichangcheng—jianping Makepoluo daoguo zhongguo ma?” [Marco Polo and the Great Wall—also on *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*], *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 4 (1998): 169-83. For a detailed account about Ibn Batuta and his extensive travels, see Yule’s *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 4 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913-16) 1-53.

<sup>14</sup> To his friends’ accusation, Polo responded that he had not even told one-half of what he had really seen. See Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1993) 54.

<sup>15</sup> See Larner’s *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 135, 148-49.

Polo's book with him and left numerous notes on the margins of his well-thumbed copy.<sup>16</sup> He clearly stated in the diary of his first westward journey that he wished to meet the Khan of the Mongol Empire, a descendant of the former Khan who showed considerable interest in Christianity and who once asked the Pope to send him one hundred learned men from Christendom to convert his own people.<sup>17</sup>

## B. Reception of Polo's *Travels*

As stated earlier, Polo's book was received by his contemporaries as a fictional romance rather than a trustworthy itinerary. Several reasons might account for this. Many passages in this book were simply too fabulous to appear real. For instance, the story about how the enormous birds called *rukhs* devoured the carcasses of elephants by first carrying them up into the sky and then dropping them to the ground is certainly beyond readers' imaginations.<sup>18</sup> The black stones [coal] extensively used by the Chinese as a replacement for firewood to heat up their baths were also considered incredible.<sup>19</sup> The story about paper money, how Kublai Khan

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<sup>16</sup> Columbus' project was first rejected by King John II of Portugal but he eventually gained support from King Ferdinand and Queen Isabelle of Spain. He set out his journey to China in August, 1492, with three ships and 104 men. Instead of *Cipangu* (Japan), he reached some island in the Caribbean Sea and believed it to be one of the 7448 islands in the China Sea that Polo noted in his account. Of this misconception, see his diaries dated 23 and 24 October, 1492, in Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelly, Jr.'s *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1989) 111, 113. For further detail about Polo's influence on Columbus see Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1, 105-56; Wood 140-41; Lerner 95.

<sup>17</sup> Of this mission, Columbus states in the prologue of his diary that: "... because of the report that I had given to Your Highnesses about the lands of India and about a prince who is called 'Grand Khan,' which means in our Spanish language 'King of Kings'; how, many times, he and his predecessors had sent to Rome to ask for men learned in our Holy Faith in order that they might instruct him in it and how the Holy Father had never provided them; and thus so many peoples were lost, falling into idolatry and accepting false and harmful religions; and Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians and Princes, lovers and promoters of the Holy Christian Faith, and enemies of the false doctrine of Mahomet and of all idolatries and heresies, you thought of sending me, Christóbal Colón, to the said regions of India to see the said princes and the peoples and the lands, and the characteristics of the lands and of everything, and to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken." See Dunn and Kelley, Jr. 17-19. In his diary dated 21 October, 1492, Columbus stated that "[b]ut I have already decided to go to the mainland and to the city of Quinsay and to give Your Highnesses' letters to the Grand Khan and to ask for, and to come with, a reply." See Dunn and Kelly, Jr. 109.

<sup>18</sup> See Latham 300.

<sup>19</sup> In 1435 Aeneas Sylvius, later Pope Pius II, visited Scotland and noted in his journal that "the poor, who almost in a state of nakedness begged at the church door, depart with joy in their faces on receiving stones as alms." Elsewhere in another account, he reported that "a sulphurous stone dug

had it made out of the bark of mulberry trees<sup>20</sup> and how it was authorized with signatures and seals of Mongol officials to give it equal values to gold and silver, must have astonished the Europeans for some generations before their first paper money was put into circulation.<sup>21</sup>

Another possible reason for European readers to discredit Polo's book was probably his praise of the wealth of China and those social welfare policies that benefited the poor, the disabled and the disadvantaged, who suffered from the unfavourable seasons. People of different religious beliefs, according to Polo, were found living together harmoniously in the same city or province. No disputes or wars were found originating from religious differences in China and the ruler Kublai Khan seemed to be quite liberal-minded with regard to all religions practiced in his domain.<sup>22</sup> Polo's positive comments on the Chinese and their life, as a result, seemed to imply that China was a better place to reside than most European countries and Kublai Khan was a more magnanimous monarch than most Christian sovereigns in the matter of religion and a more caring monarch in respect of nurturing his subjects. Since the customs and manners of the Chinese were so different from those of Polo's contemporaries, Polo, on several occasions, even predicated that his readers would never believe his stories, no matter how hard he tried to keep them both truthful and reasonable. In fact, if Polo's positive

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from the earth is used by the people as fuel." These statements prove that although coal has been used by the Scots for around two hundred years, it is still unknown to many Europeans in the fifteenth century. For more information regarding the discovery of coal in Europe, see "Coal and Bo'ness" 22 November 2004 <<http://www.bo-ness.org.uk/html/history/coal.htm>>. By contrast, Chinese have been using coal for more than 2000 years before Polo arrived at China. See Wood 67; Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1, 442-43.

<sup>20</sup> Yule, in his detailed note on paper money, suggests that it is rather some tree called *Broussonetia papyrifera* than the mulberry-tree that the Mongols used to make their banknotes. For further detail on the formats and values of the paper money, see Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1, 426n-30n.

<sup>21</sup> In 1661, Sweden becomes the first European country to have paper money, while France followed in 1720, Britain 1797 and Germany 1806.

<sup>22</sup> Polo says that Kublai Khan was not hostile to any religion, but seemed to favour Christianity most. He even sent Niccolo and Maffeo, Polo's father and uncle, to the Pope and asked him to dispatch one hundred learned men of Christian religion to his domain to convert the idolaters to Christianity. See Latham 36.

comments about the Chinese were generally regarded as a faithful personal traveling account, it was therefore likely to humiliate those European people whose minds were otherwise preoccupied. It was simply too difficult to believe there might be a better governed country on the other side of the world.<sup>23</sup> As Polo's book was usually reckoned by his contemporaries as one of Rustichello's imaginative pieces of romance, a genre that the co-author obtained his literary fame for with his two earlier works about Arthurian legend,<sup>24</sup> it is understandable to find that the favourable images of the Chinese presented in *Travels* were often questioned by their contemporaries. Indeed, the itinerary was not held as a genuine one until the sixteenth century, when sea routes to the East were discovered and more evidences were provided to verify the authenticity of Polo's account.<sup>25</sup>

After reviewing a number of early comments and critiques of the credibility of Polo's account, Nicholas Koss agrees with Wolfgang Franke's comment on the investigation of the credibility of the book and suggests that "[w]hile modern scholarship has done much to show the accuracy, and at times inaccuracy, of Polo's observations, this book was not actually accepted as truthful by its medieval readers." Instead, "Polo's work was seen more as belonging to imaginative

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<sup>23</sup> Of this difficulty, Larner suggests that "[t]he real difficulty for the western readers was in believing in the revelation of a wholly new world of towns and cities, which looks—this the most difficult to credit—more flourishing and richer in goods than those in the West." See Larner 108.

<sup>24</sup> The titles of these two works are *Gyron le Courtois avecque la devise des armes de tous les chevaliers de la table Ronde* (the courtier Gyron and all the tales of the Knights of the Round Table) and *Meliadus de Leonnoys; Ensemble plusieurs autres nobles proesses de chevalerie faictes par le Roy Artus, Palamedes et Galliot de Pré* (a group of stories of the chivalrous deeds of King Arthur and other knights of the Round Table). See Wood 40.

<sup>25</sup> Yule claims that Polo's book was not mentioned by any of his contemporary writers, such as Dante (1265-1321) and Francesco da Barberino (1264-1348), and it seems to imply that Polo's book did not catch much attention of the contemporary literati. In addition, he suggests that only seven people have alluded to Polo or his book before the end of the fourteenth century. However, thanks to the accumulation of geographical knowledge and the progress in traveling skills, many passages in Polo's account about the Central and East Asia were proved to be correct and faithful by later travellers. The book was therefore, claims Yule, more extensively distributed and read, which eventually transforms the status of the book from a "*Roman du Great Kann*" to a "Book of Facts." See Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1, 116-29, 135, 139.



literature in the tradition of the Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander romance.”<sup>26</sup>

In terms of its popularity, Wood says that scholars have already successfully identified 143 different manuscripts and printed versions of Polo’s *Travels* and found them available in most European languages.<sup>27</sup> Koss, on the other hand, further claims that there are more than one hundred manuscripts available and no one is found identical with any of the rest.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, *Travels* does play an important role in distributing images of the Chinese among European readers before European seamen and missionaries brought more information about China and her people back to Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In Latham’s edition, the chapters dedicated to China and the Chinese run from chapter 4 to chapter 5, which covers Polo’s adventures in Cathay and Manzi.<sup>29</sup> In these chapters, Polo notes the general character of the Chinese as well as various aspects of their daily life, such as their burial customs, dining habits, marital practices and religious rituals. By comparison, Polo’s narrative covers more aspects of the Chinese than its forerunners, such as *Historia Mongalorum* [History of the Mongols] (1247) by John of Plano Carpini (1182-1252) and *The Journey of*

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<sup>26</sup> See Koss 59 and Wolfgang Franke, *China and the West: The Cultural Encounter, 13th to 20th Centuries*, trans. R. A. Wilson (New York: Harper, 1967) 14.

<sup>27</sup> See Wood 43. The language of the first ever printed edition of Polo’s book is German, which is printed in 1477. Around one hundred year later, based on a Spanish version, John Frampton renders Polo’s book into English in 1579. The English title of Frampton’s translation is *The Most Noble and Famous Trauels of Marcus Paulus, One of the Nobilitie of the State of Venice, into the East Partes of the World, as Armenia, Persia, Arabia, Tartary, with Many Other Kingdoms and Prouinces. No Lesse Pleasant, than Profitable, as Appeareth by the Table, or Contents of This Booke. Most Necessary for All Sortes of Persona, and Especially for Trauellers*. See Koss 60-61; Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 2, 553. For a detailed bibliography of Polo’s book in different languages, see Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 2, 553-74.

<sup>28</sup> Koss 60

<sup>29</sup> Cathay refers to the northern part of China, which was occupied by the Mongols in 1126; while Manzi was the southern part of China, which was still under the control of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). On the origin of the name Cathay, Yule explains that “[f]or about three centuries the Northern provinces of China had been detached from native rule, and subject to foreign dynasties; first to the *Khitan*, a people from the basin of the Sungari River, and supposed (but doubtfully) to have been akin to the Tunguses, whose rule subsisted for 200 years, and originated the name of KHITAI, Khata, or CATHAY, by which for nearly 1000 years China has been known to the nations of Inner Asia, and to those whose acquaintance with it was got by that channel.” See Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 1, 11-12. Elsewhere in Chapter 29, 30 and 34, Polo also touches upon some traits attributed to the Chinese, such as drinking rice-wine, burning coal and practicing idolatry.

*William of Rubruck* (1255) by William of Rubruck (1210-1270), as there are far fewer words referring to the Chinese left by these two predecessors.<sup>30</sup> According to Koss, there are more than 18,000 words in total dedicated to the description of the Chinese in Polo's work.<sup>31</sup> Polo's encyclopedic account about the Chinese therefore offered numerous references for medieval European readers to shape their images of the Chinese.

### C. Polo's positive images of China and the Chinese

Jonathan Spence suggested that the images of the Chinese, which include people in Cathay as well as Manzi, in *The Travels* are mostly positive.<sup>32</sup> In fact, except for blaming the Chinese in some provinces for eating dogs and other flesh which Christians normally did not consume, Polo seems to regard the Chinese as an ideal model for his contemporary Europeans.<sup>33</sup> His account of the customs and manners of the inhabitants of Cathay and Manzi, therefore, turns out to be a two-sided mirror which not only reflects the Chinese as viewed objects on one side, but also his own European contemporaries on the other side.

Polo repeatedly notes that the people of Cathay and Manzi were all idolaters. However, except for implying that the features and physiques of some idols being too "devilish" to be mentioned in his book, he does not condemn the Chinese for practicing idolatry.<sup>34</sup> To a certain degree, he even praises the humanitarian

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<sup>30</sup> John of Plano Carpini, sent by Pope Innocent IV (1200-1254; papacy, 1243-54), visited the camp of Kuyuk Khan (1246-48) near Karakorum in 1246, while William of Rubruck, sent by King Louis IX of France, visited the palace of Mongke Khan (1251-1259) in 1253 and stayed there for nearly three years. For further information about Carpini and Rubruck's journeys to the Mongols, see Yule and Cordier, *Cathay*, vol. 1, 155-61.

<sup>31</sup> Koss 57.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, Spence suggests that "[t]he China that Polo gave to the world in his own extended account was a benevolently ruled dictatorship, colossal in scale, decorous in customs, rich in trade, highly urbanized, inventive in commercial dealings, weak in the ways of war." See his "The Worlds of Marco Polo" in *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (London: Penguin, 1998) 3.

<sup>33</sup> In chapter LXXVI, Polo states the people in Manzi "eat every kind of flesh, which nothing would induce a Christian to eat." See Yule and Cordier, *The Travels*, vol. 2, 187.

<sup>34</sup> On the appalling features of some idols Polo told his readers that "I assure you that the islanders, and the other idolaters as well, have idols with the heads of cattle and of pigs, of dogs and sheep, and

doctrines practiced by the idolaters.<sup>35</sup> However, if we contrast Polo's generous attitude toward Buddhistic idolatry with his less tolerant attitude towards Moslems, we might be puzzled by his double standard towards these two heathenisms. Why does he adopt two completely distinctive attitudes to comment on two religious beliefs of different pagans? On this "traditional Christian hostility" to Moslems, Latham suggests that it is probably because Christians in Polo's era usually considered Moslems their commercial rivals and Polo himself was a Christian merchant.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, instead of depicting the people of Cathay and Manzi as vicious pagans, Polo describes them as humanitarian idolaters.

As for the general manners of the Chinese, Polo gives them high credit for their superiority in these respects. He remarks

They surpass other nations in the excellence of their manners and their knowledge of many subjects, since they devote much time to their study and to the acquisition of knowledge. They speak in an agreeable and orderly manner, greet one another courteously with bright and cheerful faces, are dignified in their demeanour, cleanly at table, and so forth.<sup>37</sup>

This passage, claims Koss, is "the most complementary description of the Chinese to date in a Western text."<sup>38</sup> The general image of the Chinese presented here is therefore of a cultivated and knowledgeable people. The adjectives being used to

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of many other sorts. There are some with heads of four faces and some with three heads, one in the right place and one on either shoulder. Some have four hands, some ten, and some a thousand. But these are the best and the ones that command the greatest reverence. . . . The works of these idols are so manifold and of such devilish contrivance that it is not proper to speak of them in our book." See Latham 249.

<sup>35</sup> Polo notes that before the Tartars were familiar with the doctrines of the idolatry, they usually showed indifference to the poor. However, after some idolatry sage preached to the Great Khan, he exercised great generosity to the poor by offering them free food on a daily basis. See Latham 158.

<sup>36</sup> See Latham 21. For more passages which reveal Polo's negative attitude towards Islam see 53, 57, 134 and 305.

<sup>37</sup> Latham 160.

<sup>38</sup> Koss 68.

shape the images of the Chinese include “clean,” “cordial,” “courteous,” “dignified” and “knowledgeable.”

Another distinctive feature relating to the manner of the Chinese is their practice of filial piety. Polo, however, notes this with an ambiguous tone.

They treat their father and mother with profound respect. If it should happen that a child does anything to displease his parents or fails to remember them in their need, there is a department of state whose sole function it is to impose severe penalties on those who are found guilty of such ingratitude.<sup>39</sup>

On the one hand, Polo explains that filial piety is widely practiced by the Chinese; on the other hand, he also implies that the reason for this is because it was strictly enforced by the government, rather than exercised by individuals spontaneously.

In addition, Polo also notes the cultivated manners of Cathayan ladies by listing things they did not practice in their daily life, but European ladies normally did.

You must know that the young ladies of the province of Cathay excel in modesty and the strict observance of decorum. They do not frisk and folic and dance or fly into a pet. They do not keep watch at the windows gazing at passers-by or exposing themselves to their gaze. They do not offer a ready ear to improper stories. They do not gad about to parties and entertainments.<sup>40</sup>

He continues his praise by describing how the Cathayan ladies wear hoods to keep their gaze straight ahead when they have to expose themselves to public view and how little they normally speak in public, especially in the presence of their elders.

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<sup>39</sup> Latham 161.

<sup>40</sup> Latham 196.

On this compliment to the manners and modesty of the Cathayan ladies, Koss suggests that Polo viewed them as a model for their European counterparts. He suggests that “(t)his passage might be the first instance in a European text of making the Chinese models for Europeans.”<sup>41</sup> To synthesize the comments on Chinese virtues, we may add “filial,” “modest” and “reverential” to our list of positive images of the Chinese.

Polo gives a lengthy description of the general characteristics of the Chinese,

The natives of Kinsi<sup>42</sup> are men of peace, through being so cosseted and pampered by their kings, who were of the same temper. They have no skill in handling arms and do not keep any in their houses. There is prevalent among them a dislike and distaste for strife or any sort of disagreement. They pursue their trades and handicrafts with great diligence and honesty. They love one another so devotedly that a whole district might seem, from the friendly and neighbourly spirit that rules among men and women, to be a single household. This affection is not accompanied by any jealousy or suspicion of their wives, for whom they have the utmost trust. A man who ventured to address an unseemly remark to any married woman would be looked upon as a thorough blackguard. They are no less kind to foreigners who come to their city for trade. They entertain them in their houses with cordial hospitality and are generous of help and advice in the business they have to do.<sup>43</sup>

In this passage, many positive characteristics are attributed to the Chinese, such as cordiality, diligence, helpfulness, honesty, peaceful behaviour and veracity. They respect their women and assist foreigners affably. This lengthy passage, according to Koss, is certainly “the most positive picture of the Chinese yet presented in a

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<sup>41</sup> Koss 75.

<sup>42</sup> Kinsi is the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279); now Hangzhou in Jiangsu Province.

<sup>43</sup> Latham 219.

European text.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the peaceful characteristics of the people of Manzi, Polo also notes more than once that most Chinese are better merchants and craftsmen than warriors. For instance, as he describes the citizens of Su-chau,<sup>45</sup> he remarks:

I give you my word that the men of the province of Manzi, if they were a war-like nation, would conquer all the rest of the world. But they are not war-like. I can assure you rather that they are capable of merchants and skilled practitioners of every craft, and among them are wise philosophers and natural physicians with a great knowledge of nature.<sup>46</sup>

Due to their nature of loving peace and lack of military training Polo suggests that the rulers of the Northern Song (960-1126 AD) lost a great part of their kingdom to the pugnacious Tartars.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, in Polo's eyes, the native people of Cathay and Manzi were more capable of making themselves good businessmen, skillful craftsmen, knowledgeable philosophers and physicians than war-like soldiers.

#### **D. Polo's negative images of China and the Chinese**

Let us turn to examine some negative images that Polo ascribes to the citizens of China, which probably result from Polo's religious background as a Christian. That is to say, his judgment of those less agreeable characteristics of the Chinese was more or less conditioned by his personal religious belief. Similar to the reason why he often criticized Moslems in his narrative, his criticism of the less welcome characteristics of the Chinese was probably also resulted from his religious prejudice. His criticism of negative Chinese characteristics, therefore, reflects a humanistic

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<sup>44</sup> Koss 81.

<sup>45</sup> Su-chau, now Suzhou, is a prosperous city of Southern Song. Yule regards it the Paris of China. For more historical information about this city, see Yule and Cordier's note, *The Travels*, vol. 2, 182.

<sup>46</sup> Latham 212.

<sup>47</sup> Latham 202.

limitation and the preoccupation of a Christian visitor to China.

With regard to the flesh consumed by the Chinese, Polo denounced them for eating “dogs and other brute beasts and animals of every kind which Christians would not touch for anything in the world.”<sup>48</sup> Of this criticism on the Chinese dining tradition, Koss suggests that “[o]nly in this regard are Europeans presented as superior [to the Chinese].”<sup>49</sup>

Though Polo was tolerant to idolatry practiced in China and even praised the idolaters’ generosity towards the poor, as epitomized by the Great Khan, he nevertheless questioned the nature of paying tributes to idols. In one lengthy passage, he implies there is an unreasonable element in this worship.

You must know that the idols of these islands are of the same type as those of Cathay and Manzi. I assure you that the islanders, and the other idolaters as well, have idols with the heads of cattle and of pigs, of dogs and sheep, and of many other sorts. There are some with heads of four faces and some with three heads, one in the right place and one on either shoulder. Some have four heads, some ten, and some a thousand. But these are the best and the ones that command the greatest reverence. When Christians ask them why they make their idols in such a diversity of shapes, they answer: ‘It is in these shapes that our forefathers left them to us, and so we shall leave them to our sons and to those who come after us.’ The works of these idols are so manifold and of such devilish contrivance that it is not proper to speak of them in our book, since they are no fit hearing for Christians.<sup>50</sup>

Here Polo implies that Christianity is a more humanistic and rational religion than the idolatry practiced by the Chinese and other Asians. Again, anything in opposition to Christianity is discredited by Polo. Like other medieval Christian

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<sup>48</sup> Latham 220.

<sup>49</sup> Koss 82.

<sup>50</sup> Latham 247-48.

travellers, Polo's account, to a certain degree, also mirrors his Christian-centralism, which saw itself as superior to other religions in the world.

However, it seems that Polo's religious perspective was sometimes overshadowed by his secular perspective. For instance, as he describes how the prostitutes in the city of Kansai bewitch foreign travellers with their sophisticated skills, his religious instinct gives place to his male instinct.

Other streets are occupied by women of the town, whose number is such that I do not venture to state it. These are not confined to the neighbourhood of the squares—the quarter usually assigned to them—but are to be found throughout the city, attired with great magnificence, heavily perfumed, attended by many handmaids and lodged in richly ornamented apartments. These ladies are highly proficient and accomplished in the uses of endearments and caresses, with words suited and adapted to every sort of person, so that foreigners who have once enjoyed them remain utterly beside themselves and so captivated by their sweetness and charm that they can never forget them. So it comes about that, when they return home, they say they have been in 'Kinsai', that is to say in the city of Heaven, and can scarcely wait for the time when they may go back there.<sup>51</sup>

Though elsewhere Polo once calls these ladies "sinful" women,<sup>52</sup> this passage sounds more encouraging than condemnatory. Hence, we may say that what Polo regarded as negative about the Chinese was not only decided by his religious inclination, but also by his secular interest. His perspective is therefore of both a Christian and an ordinary merchant.

Based upon this survey of Polo's descriptions of the customs and manners of the Chinese we may say that Polo's overall image of the Chinese is positive. The Chinese are pagans, but their idolatry does not ruin their own images in the eyes of

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<sup>51</sup> Latham 215-16.

<sup>52</sup> Latham 129.



Polo. For him, the Chinese were a civilized people living on the other side of the world, whose many achievements in science and business were superior to those of the contemporary Europeans. A number of favourable images of the Chinese depicted by Polo seem to have survived in the minds of European readers for certain centuries as many European travellers and writers in the following centuries still alluded to Polo's accounts regularly.

### III. Images of China and the Chinese in *Mandeville's Travels*

#### A. The credibility of *Mandeville's Travels*

Ever since it started to circulate in manuscripts at the end of the fourteenth century, the credibility of *Mandeville's Travels* was constantly questioned by its readers. Nevertheless, it is in the late nineteenth century that scholars started to find concrete evidence to suggest that the work was actually a plagiarized text.<sup>53</sup> They found that, instead of a genuine itinerary, the text was a compilation of information from miscellaneous sources.<sup>54</sup> It is now generally accepted that the author has borrowed information about China from *The Journal of Friar Odoric* (also known as *The Travels of Odoric*), dictated by a Franciscan friar called Friar Odoric of Pordenone to a colleague called Friar William of Solagna in 1330.<sup>55</sup> M.

<sup>53</sup> A. Bovenschen (1888) and G. F. Warner (1889) are two of the earliest scholars that suggested *Mandeville's Travels* was not a genuine work and found the possible sources from which the text was compiled. See Malcolm Letts, "The Source of the Woodcuts in Wynkyn de Worde's Edition of *Mandeville's Travels*, 1499," *Library* 5rd ser. 6.3-4 (1951) 154.

<sup>54</sup> In his "Introduction" to *Mandeville's Travels* (1967) M. C. Seymour lists all the possible major and minor sources from which the real author might have borrowed information about the Holy Land and the Asia. Among them we found traces of *Speculum Historiale* (1297) by Vincent of Beauvais, *The journal of Friar John of Pisa de Carpine to the Court of Kuyuk Khan, 1254-1247* [or History of the Mongols] by John of Plano Carpini (1180-1252), *Descriptio Orientalium Partium Fratrisc Boemi De Foro Julii Provinciae Sancti Antonii* (1330) by Odoric of Pordenone (1286-1331), *Fleurs des Historiales d'Orient* (1307?) by Haiton [or Het'um] the younger and *The Letter of Prestor John* by some unknown writer of the twelfth century. For a comprehensive list of the possible sources, see Seymour's "Introduction," particularly xiv-xv. For additional information regarding this issue, see Yule, *Cathay*, vol. 2, 33-35, Margaret Wade Labarge, *Medieval Travellers: The Rich and Restless* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982) 4-5; and Koss, 96, 136-37, 153-54.

<sup>55</sup> Yule dedicates the whole second volume of his *Cathay and the Way Thither* to various questions concerning about Odoric's travels and entitles the volume "Odoric of Pordenone." He claims the author of *Mandeville's Travels* stole much from Odoric, particularly the substance about the Indies

C. Seymour suggests that it is ironic to note that Mandeville's account was generally accepted by medieval readers as a trustful itinerary; while Polo's story was seen as a book of dubious authenticity.<sup>56</sup>

*Mandeville's Travels* shares a similar fate with Polo's *Travels* on issues like authorship and authenticity.<sup>57</sup> Regarding the issue of authorship, in his "Introduction" to *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville, Kt.*, J. O. Halliwell believes that the author of the book was a real figure who visited the East in person. He repudiates one unidentified scholar who suggested that the author had never been to the East but compiled his account out of some earlier journals.<sup>58</sup> He further suggests:

If the slightest negative evidence can be obtained, I grant that there may be sufficient room for carrying out the conjecture; but otherwise, I think that such a sweeping conclusion is wholly unjustifiable. It appears to me little less than certain, that if it had not been well known that Maundeville had traveled to the East before he published his book, it could never have been taken up with such general popular avidity; and so popular, that I will undertake to say that no book, with the exception of the Scriptures, can more manuscripts be found of the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries.<sup>59</sup>

Also included in the same book, in his preface to the Cotton edition of 1727 the anonymous editor cites a lengthy biographical note<sup>60</sup> from John Bale's *Illustrium*

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and Cathay. He also lists all the possible passages that Odoric has benefited *Mandeville's Travels*. See Yule, *Cathay*, vol. 2, 33-35.

<sup>56</sup> Seymour, *Mandeville's Travels*, xiv.

<sup>57</sup> Larner noted that, to his knowledge, the only medieval cosmographer who ever cast doubt about the authenticity of *Mandeville's Travels* was a monk called Friedrich Anmann. For more detail see Larner 213.

<sup>58</sup> See J. O. Halliwell, *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville Kt.: Which Treateth of the Way to Hierusalem; and of Marvayles of Inde with other Ilands and Countries* (London, 1839) xii.

<sup>59</sup> Halliwell xii.

<sup>60</sup> This note, translated by R. Hakluyt, reads: "John Mandevil Knight, borne in the Towne of S. Albans, was so well given to the study of Learning from his childhood, that he seemed to plant a good part of his felicity in the same: for he supposed, that the honour of his Birth would nothing availe him,

*Maioris Britanniae Scriptorum Summarium* [also known as *Index of British and Other Writers or Catalogue of British Writers*, 1548] and reproduces a now lost epitaph of Mandeville<sup>61</sup> from Abraham Ortelius's *Itinerarium per Nonnullas Galliae Belgicae Partes* (1584) to suggest that the author was a man of flesh and blood, who was buried in the Abbey of Gulielmites, in the suburbs of Liege in 1371.<sup>62</sup> This anonymous editor also mentions that in one printed Latin version a physician named *Johannes ad Barbam* is believed to have persuaded and helped Mandeville to write his book.<sup>63</sup>

However, in the 1880s a new theory about the authorship was proposed by E. B. Nicholson and G. F. Warner, who proposed a physician from Liege called Jean de Bourgogne might be the real author of the book. Their proposal was approved in the ninth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1883) and the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885?).<sup>64</sup> Whereas in his "Bibliographical Note" of a modernized English version of the Cotton MS, A. W. Pollard concludes the discoveries made by former Mandeville scholars and states:

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except he could render the same more honourable, by his knowledge in good letters. Having therefore well grounded himselfe in Religion, by reading the Scriptures, he applied his Studies to the Art of Physicke, a Profession worthy a noble Wit: but amongst other things, he was ravished with a mightie desire to see the greater parts of the World, as Asia and Africa. Having therefore provided all things necessary for his journey, he departed from his Countrey, in the Yeere of Christ 1322; and, as another Ulysses, returned home, after the space of 34 Yeeres, and was then knowne to a very fewe. In the time of his Travaile he was in Scythia, the greater and lesse Armenia, Egypt, both Libyas, Arabia, Syria, Media, Mesopotamia, Persia, Chaldæa, Greece, Illyrium, Tartarie, and divers other Kingdomes of the World: and having gotten by this meanes the knowledge of the Languages, least so many and great varieties, and things miraculous, whereof himself had bene an eie witness, should perish in oblivion, he committed his whole Travell of 34 Yeeres to writing, in three divers tongues, English, French and Latine. Being arrived again in England, and having seene the wickedness of that Age, he gave out this Speech: 'In our time, (said he) it may be spoken more truly then of olde, that Vertue is gone, the Church is under foote, the Clergie is in errour, the Devill raigneth, and Simonie beareth the sway,' &c. He died at Leeege, in the Yeere 1371, the 17 day of November, being there buried in the Abbie of the Order of the Gulielmites." See Halliwell, Preface, *The Voiage*, xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>61</sup> The epitaph was believed destroyed during the French Revolution. See Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol. 2, 1.

<sup>62</sup> See Halliwell xxiv.

<sup>63</sup> Halliwell xxv.

<sup>64</sup> Koss 145-46.

We now know that our Mandeville is a compilation, as clever and artistic as Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur,' from the works of earlier writers, with few, if any, touches added from personal experience; that it was written in French, and rendered into Latin before it attracted to the notice of a series of English translators (whose own accounts of the work they were translating are not to be trusted), and that the name Sir John Mandeville was a *nom de guerre* borrowed from a real knight of this name who lived in the reign of Edward II.<sup>65</sup>

He then suggests that a person named Jean d'Outremeuse (1338-1400), a Liege chronicler who tells the world that someone called Jean de Bourgogne (also known as Jean à la Barbe or Joannes Barbatus) disclosing his real identity to him as Sir John Mandeville at his death-bed, might also have played a part in writing the aforesaid work.

Around twenty years later, in his "Introduction" to *Mandeville's Travels*, Paul Hamelius suggests that the author of *Myreur des Histors* [Mirror of Histories] (c.1395), a Frenchman called Jean D'Outremeuse, might be the real author as many similar traits can be found in both books. He argues that:

Our reasons for ascribing the *Travels* to him do not amount to absolute proof, and rest merely in strong circumstantial and internal evidence. Similarity of contents, tone and spirit between two books may go a long way towards proving common authorship, and the *Travels* have many passages and features in common with the authentic *Mirror of Histories*. The contents of Friar Odoric de Pordenone's *Travels in the Far East* have been conveyed wholesale into both works, being attributed to Sir John Mandeville in one case and to Ogier the Dane in the other (Vol. III., pp. 56-57 of the *Mirror*). Minute coincidences have been pointed out in our notes, such as the blunder of letting the four different kinds of wood in the True Cross grow from three seeds (note to p. 7, l. 24). It is hardly possible that such a mistake

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<sup>65</sup> Pollard vii.

has been committed independently by two writers. Large as is the number of examples mentioned in the notes, it might be increased by a systematic search.<sup>66</sup>

The evidence he provides including D'Outremeuse's own declaration (in the *Mirror*, vol. 4, 587) that he will not force himself to describe Tartary as he has already discussed it in detail elsewhere; D'Outremeuse is an identified author of a huge body of pseudo-historical verse devoted to the fabulous East; and the extensive similarities found in the works of both writers.<sup>67</sup> With respect to similarities found between these two works he further indicates that

The opinions and idiosyncrasies found in them, their anti-clericalism, their cynicism and licentiousness, their relentless mockery of courtly love and religious enthusiasm, joined to a boundless admiration for physical strength and for impossible feats of arms, their cringing reverence for high rank, for wealth and sounding titles, in fact, all their characteristics, mark them as the work of one man.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, Hamelius believes that the British knight John Mandeville is *de facto* no one else but a fictional character, which D'Outremeuse fabricated to mask his real identity to shelter himself from the possible religious persecution for his direct and indirect attacks on the dogmas and disciplines of the church.<sup>69</sup>

Hamelius' theory about the authorship of *Mandeville's Travels* was questioned by some scholars like Malcolm Letts and Josephine Waters Bennett around the 1950s, but supported by M. C. Seymour in 1993. Letts argues that the book was firstly

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<sup>66</sup> Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol. 2, 9.

<sup>67</sup> See Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol. 2, 9-13.

<sup>68</sup> Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol. 2, 12-13.

<sup>69</sup> For further discussion on the identity issue of John Mandeville, see Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol. 2, 7-8.

written by a knight of St. Albans called John Mandeville, who killed a man of rank<sup>70</sup> and fled from Britain in 1322 and who therefore had to adopt a *nom de guerre* Jean de Bourgogne to give a full account about his extensive traveling in the East.<sup>71</sup> He trusted his story and library to a man named Jean d'Outremeuse at his death-bed and revealed his real identity to him.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the current debate over the issue of authorship is, as David May comments, whether the genuine author was "an Englishman living in England" or "a Frenchman living in France."<sup>73</sup> For instance, Bennett (1954) claims that the author was an Englishman and he completed his work in Britain; while M. C. Seymour (1967) proposes the work was composed by a non-Englishman on the European continent, probably at Liege, about 1357.<sup>74</sup>

This historical review of the debates over the authorship of *Mandeville's Travels* illustrates that scholars' views about the authorship, or the co-authorship, of the book are by no means unanimous as no decisive evidence had been found yet to support any single proposal. However, what can be confirmed is that contemporary scholars tend to consider this work a fiction, rather than a genuine travel account.

## B. Reception of *Mandeville's Travels*

As Letts and Seymour indicated, there are around 300 manuscripts of *Mandeville's Travels* extant, whereas within only one hundred years of its debut many translations could be found in most European languages, such as Czech,

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<sup>70</sup> The real Sir John Mandeville noted by historians was implicated in the death of the Earl of Cornwell, who was killed in 1312. See Pollard's "Bibliographical Note," *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, viii.

<sup>71</sup> See Letts, *Sir John Mandeville: The Man and His Book* (London: Batchworth, 1949) 14-15; "The Source of the Woodcuts in Wynkyn de Worde's Edition of Mandeville's *Travels*, 1499," *Library* 6.3-4 (1951): 155.

<sup>72</sup> Koss 145; Letts, "The Source of the Woodcuts in Wynkyn de Worde's Edition" 155.

<sup>73</sup> David May, "Dating the English Translations of Mandeville's *Travels*: The Papal Interpolation," *Notes and Queries* 34.2 (1987): 179.

<sup>74</sup> For a summary about the debate over the nationality of the author and the place where he might have accomplished his work, see Koss 145-49.

English, High and Low German, Irish, Italian, Latin and Spanish.<sup>75</sup> C. W. R. D. Moseley comments that “[j]udging by the number of surviving manuscripts (and many English ones were mutilated and lost at the Reformation) the [*Mandeville’s*] *Travels* was one of the most popular of medieval books.”<sup>76</sup> Koss observes that the number of the manuscripts of *Mandeville’s Travels* outnumbers the total manuscripts of Odoric and Polo three to one.<sup>77</sup> With regard to its popularity in Britain Seymour notes that, in addition to one French and four Latin versions, at least five different versions were circulated in the form of manuscripts in Britain. In addition to these manuscripts, British publishers Richard Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde have printed four distinct editions in the reign of Henry VII [1485-1509].<sup>78</sup> On its influence on the men of letters in Britain, Seymour elaborates as follows:

None the less, *Mandeville’s Travels* is a deservedly popular and entertaining book. More than any other work, it popularized many of the facts and fictions of our classical inheritance—the representation of the True Cross in the banana, the weeping crocodile, ‘the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders’, and a hundred other colourings of popular imagination, draw their strength from *Mandeville’s Travels*; and in Thomas East’s 1568 edition of the Defective Version, which maintained its dominance for two centuries, it fertilized the minds and kindled the hearts of generations of poets and playwrights.<sup>79</sup>

Concerning the general reception of this book, Moseley notes that men of letters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries could hardly keep away from *Mandeville’s*

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<sup>75</sup> Letts, “The Source of the Woodcuts in Wynkyn de Worde’s Edition” 154; Seymour, *Mandeville’s Travels* xiii.

<sup>76</sup> C. W. R. D. Moseley, “The Availability of *Mandeville’s Travels* in England, 1356-1750,” *Library* 30 (1975): 125.

<sup>77</sup> Koss 144.

<sup>78</sup> Seymour, *Mandeville’s Travels*, xiii.

<sup>79</sup> Seymour, *Mandeville’s Travels*, xix-xx.

*Travels* and most of them were not able to distinguish fables from facts.<sup>80</sup> Sarah Salih specifies that many important British writers, such as Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet and Shakespeare, had either read or cited *Mandeville's Travels*.<sup>81</sup>

### C. Images of China and the Chinese in *Mandeville's Travels*

Compared with Polo's account, the author of *Mandeville's Travels* uses far less space describing the people living in Cathay and Mancy [Manzi in Polo's *Travels*]. Koss estimates that there are around 18,000 words dedicated to various aspects of the life of the Chinese in Polo's *Travels*, while only around 1,300 words in the French manuscript of *Mandeville's Travels*, dated 1371. Not surprisingly, the images of the Chinese found in Polo's account are far more developed than any other medieval texts.<sup>82</sup>

On the general appearance of the people of Mancy, the Mandeville author notes that the colour of the residents' skin is pale and white. The men have spare, but long hair and thin beards, while the women are fairer than those in any other countries beyond the sea. This country is even called Albany on account of the inhabitants' white skin.<sup>83</sup> The description of the general appearance of the Chinese is therefore neutral. The author does not dehumanize the subjects for their different physical features from the Europeans.

Like other earlier writers of China, the Mandeville author does not fail to mention the religions of the Chinese. He indicates that people both from the cities and the countryside worshipped idols. Some of their idols are "as great as giants" and they feed their idols with the smoke of steamy meat. He even describes monks

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<sup>80</sup> Moseley 126.

<sup>81</sup> Sarah Salih, "Mandeville's Travels [The Book of Sir John Mandeville]," *The Literary Encyclopedia* 26 Mar. 2004. The Literary Dictionary Company, 2 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.litencyc.com>>.

<sup>82</sup> Koss 291-92.

<sup>83</sup> Pollard 135.



as “good religious men after their faith and law.”<sup>84</sup> However, by questioning the justice of feeding reincarnated beasts, rather than the poor, who were claimed by the monks nowhere to be found in China, the Mandeville author shows his doubt about the legitimacy of the pagan doctrines. With regard to this reference to the religious life of the Chinese, Koss suggests that Mandeville’s doubts can be viewed as an attack on those monks for their insufficient concern for the living.<sup>85</sup> Like Polo, the Mandeville author’s criticism of Chinese religion, to a certain degree, also reflects his own Christian ideology and therefore places the Chinese idolatry in a negative light. Another interesting feature about the religious life of the people of Mancy noted by the author is their liberal attitude to diverse religions. He mentions that many Christians and Saracens can be found in Cathay, where they serve as physicians in the court of the Khan; and in Mancy, where they are mostly businessmen.<sup>86</sup> No dispute between people of different religious beliefs, both in the lands of Cathay and Mancy, has ever been noticed by the author. Therefore, it seems reasonable for us to assume that the Chinese idolaters depicted by the Mandeville author were, in comparison to European Christians, generally more liberal-minded to different religious beliefs and doctrines. A similar observation, as I have illustrated elsewhere earlier, can also be found in Polo’s account.

In addition, with regard to the general living situation the author first notes that neither poor nor beggars can be found in Mancy.<sup>87</sup> Later in a conversation when he asks some local monks why they would rather give food to beasts than to the poor, they inform him that it is simply because there are no poor people in the country. This positive picture of China must have been a marvel to many medieval

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<sup>84</sup> Pollard 135-37.

<sup>85</sup> Koss 173.

<sup>86</sup> Pollard 145, 156.

<sup>87</sup> The author notes that there is “no needy man, ne none that goeth on begging.” See Pollard 135.

European readers of that time. On this positive account Koss remarks that:

Earlier accounts of China have mentioned it as a land without poor and this point is also made in the opening general description of Manzi in the Mandeville text. I would see this addition as emphasizing this situation in China, and hence a criticism of Europe, where presumably beggars were common.<sup>88</sup>

Hence, by describing numerous cities in Mancy as well-provisioned and densely-populated, supplied with abundant and cheap food, the Mandeville author constructed a very favourable picture of China.

As for the people in Cathay, the Mandeville author barely makes any distinction between the Tartars and the Chinese in his account. His description of the inhabitants in north China is therefore exclusively about the nomadic Tartars, who took land from the Chinese and made the ruling sovereign flee to the south part of China in 1127.<sup>89</sup> Since the focus of this thesis will be the various literary images of the Chinese in English texts up to the mid nineteenth century and I have no intention to enlarge my scope to discuss the images of the Tartars in Mandeville's account, I will therefore restrict myself to the subjects who still controlled the south part of China called Mancy.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Koss 246.

<sup>89</sup> The tribe of Tartars which took land from the Northern Song Dynasty was called Jin (1151-1234) by the Han Chinese. The Southern Song regime lasted for 153 years, till it was exterminated by the Mongol Tartars in 1279, four years after Marco Polo reached Shangdu, the summer palace of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

<sup>90</sup> Chapters dedicated to the Tartars in Cathay run from chapter XXIII to XXVI, 139-167. In these chapters the Mandeville author describes the grandeur of Great Khan's palace, his majestic feasts at the imperial court, the richly-embroidered robes of the people who attend the imperial parties, various beasts the Tartars consume and their table manner, costumes of burying the common people and the Khans, images of their idols, their fighting skills, strategies and weapons. They are described as having small eyes, little beard, sheared but sparse hair. They are sturdy-minded and can endure much more pain than any other people in the world because they are trained to build up this characteristic in their youth. Besides, they show obedience to their sovereigns and do not fight or argue with other people. There is no thievery or robbery in the land of Cathay. People respect one another, but show no reverence to strangers, even if they be great princes.

As a whole, most descriptions of China and the Chinese in Mancy noted by the Mandeville author are fairly positive. He uses many positive adjectives to describe the riches of the cities and the plenteousness of food.<sup>91</sup> He presents the citizens of Mancy as open-minded idolaters, who live peacefully with people of different religious beliefs.

#### IV. Summary

From this brief discussion of *Travels* and *Mandeville's Travels* it can be generally summarized that the images of the Chinese in both works tend to be idealized and positive. Besides, we also observe that both Polo and the Mandeville author seem to be more impressed with the material prosperity of the Chinese than their spiritual life.<sup>92</sup> As a whole, the Chinese are depicted as friendly and helpful to visitors from afar, open-minded to religious differences and peaceful in mind. They are good businessmen, but not warlike soldiers. Generally speaking, Chinese women are beautiful, graceful and moderate. As for the material life of the Chinese, both Polo and the Mandeville author praised the riches of the Chinese and the prosperity of their commercial life. Their admiration for the material and spiritual life of the Chinese therefore suggests that their own countries were, comparatively speaking, in a less satisfied state. For them, China is like a prototype of a Utopia where people may enjoy a free religious life and a flourishing material life. As they suggested that there were no beggars on the streets and the disadvantaged were carefully looked after by the government in China, they also implied that the poor and the disadvantaged were not properly taken care of by their own governments in

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<sup>91</sup> Pollard 135-36.

<sup>92</sup> Raymond Dawson observes that neither Polo nor other navigators to the coasts of South China in the sixteenth century, such as Galeote Pereira, Gaspar da Cruz, and Martin de Rada, had ever mentioned the name of Confucius in their travel accounts. See Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon: An analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967) 6.

Europe. They praised the lenient attitude of the Chinese emperors towards different sects of religions, it therefore suggested that the religious life of the Europeans was rigidly under the control of the churches. Hence, as Polo and the Mandeville author comment on China and the Chinese in an admiring tone, they simultaneously criticised the drawbacks of their own European societies in an indirect way.

These early images of China and the Chinese, no matter whether they are factual or fictional, offered vivid materials for many British writers in the following centuries to create their own Chinese characters. Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether early British writers inherited these positive Chinese images from Polo and the Mandeville writer, and to what extent they may have modified such images in their own works. The following section will examine a number of travel accounts by British writers before the nineteenth century and explore the possible inter-textual relationship with these two early texts.

## Chapter Three

### British Travel Accounts of China from the 1750s to the 1800s

#### I. Historical review of early British accounts of China

Ever since the sea routes from Europe to China were discovered by the Portuguese and Spanish explorers in the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century,<sup>1</sup> more and more European explorers and merchants used these routes to visit China thereafter. In 1514, a Portuguese ship reached Canton and did successful business there. She was possibly the first European ship to visit China.<sup>2</sup> The British East India Company, following the steps of the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Dutch, also extended its reach to China and successfully established a Factory in Canton in 1715.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to the publications of some early British travelogues and navigation diaries, which mentioned various customs and practices of the Chinese, the British literati were able to derive materials for their imagination to construct their own images of China and her people.

From the 1750s to the 1840s, around twenty travelogues or memoirs about China were produced by British writers.<sup>4</sup> Before the Macartney embassy left for China in 1792, there were two travelogues available: Richard Walter's *A Voyage round the World in the Years MDCC XL, I, II, III, IV*, by George Anson (1748) and John Bell's *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia to Divers Parts of Asia* (1763). After Macartney came back to London in 1794, members of his embassy published

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<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese Vasco da Gama (1460-1524) found a sea route from Europe to Asia via the Cape of Good Hope in 1498, while his fellow countryman Fernando de Magallanes (1480-1521) and his crew working for the Spanish government, sailed west and found another sea route to Asia via South America in 1522. After that, more Europeans came to Asia. See Xin Jianfei, *Shijie de zhongguo guan* [China in World View] (Taipei: Bo yuan, 1993) 123.

<sup>2</sup> See John T. Pratt, *China and Britain* (London: Collins, 1927) 14.

<sup>3</sup> See Pratt 15.

<sup>4</sup> See Qiu Ye, "Yingguo zaoqi youji de zhongguo xingxiang kaocha: zong shu" [A Comprehensive Review of the Chinese Images in Early English Travelogues], *Zhonghua dushu bao* 8 Oct. 2003 <<http://www.gmw.cn/01ds/2003-10/08/10-224dbe7998352b9e48256db90005d265.htm>>.

five travelogues and diaries about their journeys to China, including the official version of Macartney's report, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, finished by George Staunton and printed in 1797.<sup>5</sup> In 1816, the British government dispatched another embassy, headed by William Pitt Amherst (1773-1857), to visit the court of China. Two travelogues were finished by members of this embassy (1816-1817), including Henry Ellis's *Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China* (1817) and Clarke Abel's *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China: and of a Voyage to and from That Country, in the Years 1816 and 1817* (1818). Among them, the most frequently cited works are probably Anson and Staunton's accounts.

In his *La littérature comparée* (1989) Yves Chevrel suggested that traveling has been the best way to meet foreigners since ancient times.<sup>6</sup> Meng Hua also indicated that the study of travelogues is a traditional field of comparative literature and suggested that

The authors of travelogues often play double roles: they are constructors and promoters of *imaginaire social*, but they are also conditioned by it to a certain degree. Their images of the foreign lands are usually reflections of the *imaginaire social*. Hence, in conducting an imagological research of travelogues, one often has to approach the texts via a nation's intellectual history and mental history.<sup>7</sup>

Both Chevrel and Meng have pointed out the importance of studying travelogues in

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<sup>5</sup> According to Huang Yinong, fourteen members of the Macartney embassy published works about the embassy. Their publications include travelogues, reports, memoirs, diaries and albums of drawings. See Huang Yinong, "Long yu shi duiwang de shijie: yi majiaerni shituan fang hua hou de chubanyu wei li" [A World Where a Dragon and a Lion Gazing Each Other: On Post-Macartney Embassy Publications], *Gugong xueshu jikan* 21.2 (2003): 265.

<sup>6</sup> See Meng Hua, "Beijiaowenxue xingxiangxue lunwen fanyi, yanjiu zhaji" [Comparative Imagology: Translations of Conference Papers and Research Notes], *Beijiaowenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 15.

<sup>7</sup> Meng Hua, "Beijiaowenxue xingxiangxue lunwen fanyi, yanjiu zhaji" 16.

analyzing the images of a foreign land or foreign people in a native discourse. If we examine the functions of travelogues in imagological studies, they appear to have several functions. First, they can be used as coordinates to help one to evaluate whether an image of an “Other” depicted in a fictional text is supporting or subverting a popular image of the “Other” in question. This is based upon the assumption that a travelogue tends to reflect the author/observer’s will to reproduce an immediate reality as faithfully as possible, even though the reality might ironically be a prejudiced one. Hence, the nature of a travelogue is similar to that of a historical account because both are assumed to be faithful records of human activities. The more likeness an Other’s image of a literary text shares with the one of a travelogue, the less subversive force the former may bring into a society; contrarily, the less likeness an Other’s image of a literary text shares with the one of a travelogue, the more subversive force the former may bring to a society. Second, as most travelers tend to have some preconceived or stereotypical images of the land and people they are about to visit, they often note in their travelogues the differences between their preconceptions and the real situation perceived by them in person. By studying an author’s own reflection on his pre-arrival information and the differences between it and his own personal observation, we may not only get a picture about the materials available to the author, but also the author’s attitudes towards them. Third, as I am about to illustrate in this section, the identity and mentality of the traveler, the destination, purpose and result of the journey as well as the inhabitants the traveler meets may all contribute to the perspective of the narration and the tone of the travelogue, it is therefore interesting to see how differently an “Other” may be depicted by people of the same ethnic origin under different conditions.

As I have just suggested that Anson and Staunton’s accounts about China were

frequently cited by their contemporaries and later writers, probably because the former is the first British account that discredited the Jesuits' flowery images of the Chinese, while the latter being the first systematic official evaluation of the ancient oriental empire, I will examine what kind of alter-images of the Chinese and self-images of the British have been created in these two works. John Bell's travelogue about his experience of visiting China offered a very different picture to those of Anson and Staunton and consequently can be used as an example to illustrate how China, as an "Other," can be viewed from completely different angles by writers of the same era.

## II. George Anson's images of China and the Chinese

In September 1740 Commodore George Anson and his squadron, consisting of six warships and two storeships, left Portsmouth and sailed westward to the Pacific, to where the squadron was due to meet its enemy, the Spaniards. The squadron came back to England in June 1744, but with only 145 men alive. More than 1,300 souls had perished during the expeditions.<sup>8</sup> As Anson had successfully captured a number of Spanish ships as prizes and made a handsome profit in the expeditions, his voyage was esteemed by the British public, noted N. A. M. Rodger, as "a classic tale of endurance and leadership in the face of fearful disasters. . . which did something to restore national self-esteem battered by an unsuccessful war."<sup>9</sup> Soon after Anson came back to London, he was promoted to rear-admiral in April 1745 and vice-admiral in July 1746.

Anson's squadron visited China, mainly Macao and Canton, in late 1742 and early 1743. During his short visits, Anson was not as well received, as he thought

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<sup>8</sup> See N. A. M. Rodger, "Anson, George, Baron Anson (1697–1762)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 14 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/574>>. Hereafter *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* will be cited as *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>9</sup> Rodger, "Anson, George, Baron Anson (1697–1762)."



he was entitled to be as a British commodore, by local governments. He had difficulties in getting his 60-gun warship *Centurion* repaired and obtaining enough provision for his crew. He even found that some local merchants tricked him by selling him stone-crammed fowls and water-injected hogs.<sup>10</sup> Due to experiencing a number of bad communications with the local Chinese officers and being cheated by some of the local merchants, he left China with a very unfavourable impression of her.

In 1748 a book called *A Voyage round the World in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV*, by George Anson was finished by Richard Walter, the chaplain of the *Centurion*.<sup>11</sup> The book immediately became a best-seller and was reprinted in its full or abridged form in numerous editions. It was soon translated into other European languages and caught a widespread interest of foreign readers.<sup>12</sup>

Before I proceed to discuss the Chinese images depicted in this book, it seems necessary to note the historical background of the story. After the British naval squadrons defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, the British replaced the Spanish and became the most powerful naval country in the world. As the naval force was usually considered as an important index to evaluate one country's strength in Europe, most European countries had invested a lot to build their own fleets. Hence, when Anson and his crew visited China, they naturally paid a lot of attention to the naval force of China and suggested that the Chinese fleet was no match for the

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<sup>10</sup> See George Anson, *A Voyage round the World, in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV*, by George Anson, comp. Richard Walter (London, 1748) 524-25, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 1 Oct. 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>11</sup> Walter's authorship of the book was soon questioned in 1761 when James Wilson, the editor of *Mathematical Tracts* of Benjamin Robins, claimed that Robins was the real author and Walter only provided notes. Walter did not repudiate the accusation immediately and it was probably because he was too ill to respond. For more about the authorship debate, see Elizabeth Baigent, "Walter, Richard (1717-1785)." *Oxford DNB*, Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 14 Jan. 2007 and Brett D. Steele, "Robins, Benjamin (1707-1751)." *Oxford DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 14 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23823>>.

<sup>12</sup> The first German translation appeared in 1749, French and Russian in 1751.

British, even though it was not in best shape. Besides, as the European countries used their powerful naval force to secure the sea routes for overseas business, their merchants also followed the British flags to settle in various parts of the world. As most of the local inhabitants of the new European settlements could not rival the Europeans in military force, the latter gradually formed a contemptuous attitude towards the local inhabitants of other continents. A number of biased ideas of the “Other” were therefore generated from and supported by this military superiority. Consequently, when the Europeans visited other lands, they tended to use their own culture and military strength as standards to judge the cultural achievements of others. As expected, what they found in others tended to further confirm the superiority of the Europeans in every aspect. Another important reminder about the book is that the author considered Canton as an epitome of China as a whole and what they had seen or experienced in Canton would likely be observed in the rest of the country.<sup>13</sup> Hence, according to this ratiocination, all the Chinese citizens and officers elsewhere were as bad as the ones they met in Canton and the Chinese government as corrupt and inefficient as the local one in Canton. Bearing these two features of the account in mind will help us to better understand Anson and his fellow countrymen’s contemptuous attitudes towards the Chinese.

As suggested earlier, Anson did not have a good experience when he visited

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<sup>13</sup> The author suggested that “And though it may be supposed, that observations made at Canton only, a place situated in the corner of the Empire, are very imperfect materials on which to found any general conclusions, yet as those who have had opportunities of examining the inner parts of the country, have been evidently influenced by very ridiculous prepossessions, and as the transactions of Mr. Anson with the Regency of Canton were of an uncommon nature, in which many circumstances occurred, different perhaps from any which have happened before, I hope the following reflections, many of them drawn from these incidents, will not be altogether unacceptable to the reader.” See Anson 540-41. Whereas in the travelogue of John Meares, who visited Canton in 1789, the author suggested that if the British were to form their images of the Chinese solely from their observation of the people in Canton, it would be doing the Chinese a great injustice. He then suggested that the Chinese were a “liberal, enlightened and polished people.” See John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789* (London: 1790) lxxv, *The Making of the Modern World*, 19 Jan. 2007 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/>>. Meares’ opinion of Anson’s assumption was shared by another British visitor to China John Barrow, the private secretary of Macartney. Barrow dismissed Anson’s speculation as “presumptuous and unfair.” See Qian Zhongshu 198.

China, and his impressions of this country and its inhabitants were, generally speaking, negative. In the book, the author gave many examples to discredit the Chinese and complained that China, in comparison to England, was an autocratic and stagnant country, whose poor military force implied that it could be an easy prey for any well-equipped European country. In order to consider the distinctive images of the subjects, I would like to discuss the images of China and its inhabitants individually.

In terms of the general image of the country, the author first noted that “the *Centurion* alone was capable of destroying the whole navigation of the port of *Canton*, or of any other port in *China*, without running the least risqué from all the force the *Chinese* could collect.”<sup>14</sup> He even suggested that the British crew had behaved with great “modesty and reserve” not to attack the defenceless Chinese.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere he challenged the Jesuits’ “boundless panegyric” of the Chinese government and suggested that:

[T]he favourable accounts often given of their prudent regulations for the administration of their domestic affairs, are sufficiently confuted by their transactions with Mr. *Anson*: For we have seen that their Magistrates are corrupt, their people thievish, and their tribunals crafty and venal. Nor is the constitution of the Empire, or the general orders of the State less liable to exception: Since that form of Government, which does not in the first place provide for the security of the public against the enterprises of foreign powers, is certainly a most defective institution.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, in the eyes of Anson, the Chinese government was an inefficient and inflexible one, which was run by a group of crafty, corrupt, greedy, immoral and

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<sup>14</sup> Anson 479-80.

<sup>15</sup> See Anson 480.

<sup>16</sup> Anson 544-45.

venal officials.

With regards to the Chinese public, Anson and his colleagues also criticised their characteristics and their cultural achievements. The Chinese merchants were described by Anson as “dastard.” He believed that the local people of Canton had never seen such a huge warship like *Centurion* before.<sup>17</sup> In addition, he presumed that the Chinese were “extremely defective in all military skill.”<sup>18</sup> As for their natures, the author suggested that

[I]t may perhaps be impossible for an *European*, ignorant of the customs and manners of that nation, to be fully apprized of the real incitements to this behaviour. Indeed, thus much may undoubtedly be asserted, that in artifice, falsehood, and an attachment to all kinds of lucre, many of the *Chinese* are difficult to be paralleled by any other people; but then the combination of these talents and the manners in which they are applied in particular emergencies, are often beyond the reach of a Foreigner’s penetration. . . .<sup>19</sup>

Suggesting that the Chinese’ “talent” for artifice and falsehood was unsurpassed by other peoples and even beyond the imagination of foreigners, the author therefore considerably degraded the human nature of the Chinese. To further illustrate his antipathy, he added that the Chinese were mostly “fraudulent and selfish.”<sup>20</sup> He even suggested that the Chinese were a poor and unhygienic people because some Chinese boats had followed the *Centurion* and picked up the carrion dumped by the British sailors.<sup>21</sup> Probably to make his evaluation of the Chinese as comprehensive as possible, the author also commented on the skills of the Chinese, suggesting that they might outdo others only by their capacity for imitation. Therefore, they were

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<sup>17</sup> Anson 474.

<sup>18</sup> Anson 512.

<sup>19</sup> Anson 518-19.

<sup>20</sup> Anson 519.

<sup>21</sup> Anson 525.

unable to challenge the Europeans in the capability of designing and making complicated machinery, such as cannons and warships.<sup>22</sup> As for their literature and language, the author repudiated the former as “obstinacy” and “absurdity,”<sup>23</sup> the latter as “rude and inartificial,” which is full of “infinite obscurity and confusion.”<sup>24</sup> He even concluded that “the history and inventions of past ages, recorded by these perplexed symbols, must frequently prove unintelligible; and consequently the learning and boasted antiquity of the Nation must, in numerous instances, be extremely problematical.”<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, as a whole, though some individual Chinese were once praised as frank and honest by the author,<sup>26</sup> we can see that the images of the Chinese are mostly negative. The Chinese are depicted as an arrogant, backward, greedy, hypocritical, selfish, timid, unhygienic and unintelligent people.

Jean-Marc Moura suggests that:

The images of foreigners belong to a network of a basic description of a society and any group of people confirm their own identities by either identifying with or rejecting these images. Therefore, any reference to foreigners or a description of them will reflect a social system. In other words, one begins to take shape when one excludes oneself from the others.<sup>27</sup>

Applying this proposal to our analysis of the images depicted in Anson's *A Voyage round the World*, we will see that whenever the author creates an image of the

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<sup>22</sup> Anson 541.

<sup>23</sup> Anson 542.

<sup>24</sup> Anson 542. It is interesting to note that Anson knew nothing about the Chinese language, let alone the Chinese literature, but he criticized both like he was an expert of them.

<sup>25</sup> Anson 543.

<sup>26</sup> It is only when the Chinese individuals show good intention to the British or when they comply with the request of the British that they are likely to be given positive comments.

<sup>27</sup> See Moura, “Wenxue xingxiangxue yu shenhua piping: liangzhong bijiaowenxue yanjiu fangfa de jiaohui yu fenxi” 230. The English translation is mine and it is based on the Chinese translation. However, a native speaker of French has been consulted to make sure the translation is faithful to the original. For the French original, see appendix 1.

“Other,” he also inevitably creates an image of the self, either in the form of a metaphor or a simile. It is in this contrasting relationship between “Self” and “Other” that one differentiates oneself from “Others” and established one’s own identity. Hence, from the list of images attributed to the Chinese, we can see that the negative images of the Chinese have more or less mirrored the positive ones of the British. The author suggests that England was an efficient, powerful, progressive, warlike, wealthy and well-governed country, while the British were a brave, civilized, disciplined, dutiful, honest, humane, hygienic, industrious, ingenious, intelligent, righteous, talented and unselfish people. Therefore, under the premise that everything found in Britain and the British are superior to those of China and the Chinese, the latter is often maliciously shaped or even smeared in order to match the preoccupied negative images held by the European viewers.

### III. John Bell’s *A Journey from St Petersburg to Peking, 1719-22*<sup>28</sup>

#### A. Bell’s journeys and publication of his itineraries

In 1763 a Scottish doctor called John Bell published his itineraries, *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia to Divers Parts of Asia*, in which he included detailed accounts about his early travels to several Asian and European countries as a physician in four Russian embassies, plus an English translation of a journal written by a Russian named Lorenz de Lange, who recounted his residence in Peking [nowadays Beijing] as a Russian consul for seventeen months.<sup>29</sup> Bell’s own

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<sup>28</sup> The edition that I use is J. L. Stevenson’s *A Journey from St Petersburg to Peking, 1719-22* (1965). Stevenson extracts Bell’s itinerary to Peking from his 1763 edition and gives it a comprehensive introduction and extensive notes.

<sup>29</sup> De Lange’s diplomatic status as a Russian consul residing in Peking was not fully recognized by the court of China and he was given no chance to present his accreditation from Peter the Great (1672-1725) to the imperial court of China. This was because his presence in Peking as a permanent diplomatic agent would violate the Qing court’s tradition of receiving foreign representatives. Therefore, even though the Emperor had granted permission to allow de Lange to stay in Peking, the Chinese officials skillfully dodged recognizing his diplomatic identity by not receiving his accreditation. See John Lynn Stevenson, introduction, *A Journey from St Petersburg to Peking, 1719-22* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1965) 19. In fact, a similar request to appoint a diplomatic

itineraries included one journey to China (1721-22), two journeys to Persia (1715-18, 1722) and one journey to Constantinople (1737-38). Bell did not publish any one of his itineraries until 1763, a quarter of century after he finished his last diplomatic mission in 1738. Regarding the accounts of his four journeys, the story about his travel to Peking is generally considered the most complete and interesting one, which seems to outshine the other sections of his book.<sup>30</sup>

When Bell's book first came out in 1763, it was printed in two handsome quarto volumes and sold by subscription.<sup>31</sup> Its high demand by readers of various backgrounds is clearly indicated by the long list of subscribers, which comprised around 510 names and more than 610 sets.<sup>32</sup> Up to 1811 the whole set was reprinted 5 times, including one pirate edition released in Ireland. The French translation appeared in 1766 and the Russian translation in 1776.<sup>33</sup>

The significance of Bell's book with respect to studying British images of the Chinese can be illustrated by highlighting the following facts: Bell was the first British writer to visit the capital of China in person and write about it,<sup>34</sup> he was the

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agent to reside in Peking permanently was proposed to the throne of China again by George III (1738-1820). It was rejected by Emperor Qianlong because it fundamentally infringed "the Celestial Empire's ceremonial system." For more discussion on this issue see Alain Peyrefitte, *The Collision of Two Civilisations* (London: Harvill, 1993) 198, 290 and James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 187-89.

<sup>30</sup> See Philip Carter and Robert Harrison, "Bell, John (1691-1780)," *Oxford DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 2004, 2 November 2005 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2011>> and Stevenson 2.

<sup>31</sup> See Stevenson 25.

<sup>32</sup> For a complete list of subscribers of the 1763 edition, see Bell 225-31.

<sup>33</sup> For further detail regarding the editions and translations of Bell's book, see Stevenson 25.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, another British physician named Thomas Garvan visited the capital of China five years earlier than Bell did. Garvan used to work for the Russian Czar as well before he was invited by Emperor Kanghsi to work at his court in Peking. Nevertheless, Garvan did not leave any writing about his life in China. This consequently made Bell the first British writer who ever visited the capital of Chinese and wrote about his life there. See Qin Ye's "Yingguoren guanyu Beijing de soubu zhenshi youji" [The First Authentic Traveling Account about Beijing Written by an Englishman]. 1 December 2005 <<http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/HIAW/445207.htm>>. In addition, British citizens' first presence in China could be dated as early as 1637, when John Weddell (1583-1639/40) visited Macao and Canton. Weddell even fought several skirmishes with local Chinese militia when he forced his way up to a port in Anunghoy. These skirmishes were noted by diarist Peter Mundy, who joined Weddell's journey to China in 1637. However, due to unknown reasons Mundy's manuscript was not published until the early twentieth century by the Hakluyt Society in 1907, entitled *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*. After

first British writer who had an audience with the Chinese emperor and his council members and who had ever written about the emperor based upon his own first-hand observation. Thirdly, as Bell claimed that he only wrote about what he personally saw or heard about on his journey<sup>35</sup> and his work shows no distinctive evidence of whimsicality,<sup>36</sup> his account became a work of great importance in contrast with other more imaginative eighteenth century literary works, such as Horace Walpole's *A Letter from Xo Ho* (1757) and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762).

### B. Bell's images of the Chinese public

Before examining the various images of the Chinese portrayed in Bell's account, it is necessary to note that Bell clearly distinguished the ruling Tartars from the subjected Chinese in his writing. Therefore, when he uses the collective term "the Chinese," he is most likely referring to the Han Chinese who were subjected by the Mantzur [Manchu] Tartars after 1664, rather than all the inhabitants living in

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Weddell's visit, British ships were more frequently seen in the waters of China and four British commercial centres were established in China between 1672 and 1700. See Qin Quojing and Gao Huanting, *Qianlong huangdi yu Magaerni* [Emperor Qianlong and Sir George Macartney] (Beijing: Zijincheng, 1998) 22-23. There are two authentic travel accounts mentioning the Chinese written by Englishmen and published before Bell's book. They are William Dampier's *A New Voyage round the World: Describing Particularly, the Isthmus of America, Several Coasts and Islands in the West Indies, the Isles of Cape Verd, the Passage by Terra del Fuego, the South Sea Coasts of Chili, Peru, and Mexico; the Isle of Guam one of the Ladrones, Mindanao, and Other Philippine and East-India Islands near Cambodia, China, Formosa, Luconia, Celebes, &c. New Holland, Sumatra, Nicobar Isles; the Cape of Good Hope, and Santa Hellena. Their Soil, Rivers, Harbours, Plants, Fruits, Animals, and Inhabitants. Their Customs, Religion, Government, Trade, &c.* [also known as *A New Voyage round the World*] (1697) and Alexander Hamilton's *A New Account of the East Indies: Being the Observations and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton, Who Spent His Time There from the Year 1688 to 1723* [also known as *A New Account of the East Indies*] (1727). However, neither Dampier nor Hamilton had ever visited the capital of China during their short visits.

<sup>35</sup> Bell's principle of writing his itinerary is "[i]t is the business of a traveller to describe places and things without prejudice or partiality; and exhibit them fairly, as they really appear. This principle it shall be my study to keep always in view." See Stevenson 25.

<sup>36</sup> Stevenson justifies the reliability of Bell's work by saying "[t]here is another background which needs only the briefest of mentions, so little influence does it have on the book, and that is the vision of 'Cathay', that perfect land ruled by philosophy, which remained a powerful literary convention throughout most of the eighteenth century, though the convention outlasted the belief that such a place existed. John Bell takes no account whatever of it, carefully setting down only what he saw, and recording, sometimes with qualification, only what he believed to be true of the things he was told, and with no sideways glances at the nonsense—often, it is true, engaging nonsense—that was still in his day being written about China by those who had never been there." See Stevenson 21.



China. Bearing this racial distinction in mind will help us to see the fact that Bell's images of the citizens in China comprise images of the Han Chinese and images of the Tartars.

Bell and the Russian embassy, sent by Peter the Great and led by Ambassador Leoff Vassilovich Ismayloff [also known as Leon Vasilievitch Izmailov], entered the Chinese territories on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September in 1720 and left China on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1721. During his stay in China, mostly in Peking, he wrote numerous notes on things he saw or heard about and these notes became the raw materials for his book decades later. The content of his notes covered a large range of aspects of Chinese people's life, such as the imperial ceremony of receiving foreign delegates, the hunting sport of Emperor Kanghsi [Kamhi in Bell's text], the royal banquets given by Kanghsi, the duties of foreign missionaries at the Chinese imperial court, the structure and size of the Great Wall, the natural resources of China, the history of military conflicts between the Tartars and the Chinese, the main religions of the Chinese, the Chinese New Year festivals, the diplomatic relationships between China and her neighbouring states and Chinese fairy tales. The sections dedicated to China and her people run from chapter VII to chapter XIII in the 1965 edition.

Bell described the Chinese as follows: "[t]he Chinese are generally of a middle size, and slender make; but very active."<sup>37</sup> As for the Chinese ladies, Bell elaborated a little more:

I shall now make a few remarks upon the ladies, who have many good qualities besides their beauty. They are very cleanly, and modest in their dress. Their eyes are black, so little, that, when they laugh, you can scarce see them. Their hair is black as jet, and neatly tied up, in a knot, on the crown of the head, adorned with artificial flowers of their

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<sup>37</sup> Bell 184.

own making; which are very becoming. The better sort, who are seldom exposed to the air, have good complexions. Those who are inclined to the olive, take care to add a touch of white and red paint, which they apply very nicely.<sup>38</sup>

He then finished the depiction by indicating Chinese ladies of distinction were seldom seen outside; when they went out to visit their close relations, they always travelled in closed chairs and attended by servants.<sup>39</sup> Besides, Bell also highlighted the fashion of binding feet at an early age, a practice popular only among Chinese ladies and seldom found among ladies of Tartar origin. What is of interest here regarding the fashion of foot-binding is that Bell does not condemn the practice. Instead, he gives a full account, which includes a folktale about the origin of foot-binding, and leaves moral judgment to his readers.

Bell seems to have a high regard for the Chinese:

The Chinese are a civilized and hospitable people; complaisant to strangers, and to one another; very regular in their manners and behaviour, and respectful to their superiors; but, above all, their regard for their parents, and decent treatment of their women of all ranks, ought to be imitated, and deserve great praise. Their good qualities are a natural consequence of the sobriety, and uniformity of life, to which they have been long accustomed.

The general regularity, and decency of manners, among the Chinese, is obvious to all who see and observe them with the least attention.<sup>40</sup>

This short passage shows that Bell considered the Chinese a people possessing various good qualities and by no means inferior to his European contemporaries in terms of their behaviour and temperament. He even suggested that the Europeans

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<sup>38</sup> Bell 183.

<sup>39</sup> Bell 183-84.

<sup>40</sup> Bell 182. Elsewhere the Chinese was described by the visitor as complaisant again, see Bell 152.

should follow the example of the Chinese in practicing filial piety and respecting women of all ranks. In addition to the good qualities listed above, elsewhere Bell further attributed many positive characteristics to the Chinese, such as decency (in manners), honesty (in conducting business),<sup>41</sup> ingeniousness, sobriety, parsimoniousness (in workmanship), patience (in finishing works), and peace-loving (in handling international affairs).<sup>42</sup>

With regard to their craftsmanship, Bell further pointed out that:

The Chinese, it is well known, are excellent performers in several mechanic arts; particularly, as potters, dyers, japanners, joiners, and paper-makers. In the article of paper-making they excel even the Europeans.

Their workmanship in metals is but clumsy; except only founding, at which they are very expert. The arts of statuary, sculpture, and painting, have made but small progress among them. . . .

The making of clocks and watches was lately introduced, under the protection of the present Emperor; who, at his leisure hours, amuses himself with whatever is curious either in art or nature.<sup>43</sup>

Here he suggests an interesting contrast between the Chinese and the Europeans in terms of their achievements and development in handicrafts. Though the Chinese excelled in the arts of traditional handicrafts, such as making lacquer, paper and pottery, their skills in making complicated and delicate metal work, such as clocks and watches, were inferior to those of the Europeans.<sup>44</sup> Bell's overall evaluation of

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<sup>41</sup> Of the honest personality of the Chinese, Bell seemed to praise them with a slight reservation. He said "[t]hey are honest, and observe the strictest honour and justice in their dealings. It must, however, be acknowledged, that not a few of them are much addicted to knavery, and well skilled in the arts of cheating. They have, indeed, found many Europeans as great proficients in that art as themselves. And if you once cheat them, they are sure to retaliate on the first opportunity." See Bell 184.

<sup>42</sup> See Bell 176, 181, 182, and 184 for detailed descriptions.

<sup>43</sup> Bell 182.

<sup>44</sup> In George Staunton's itinerary, which recorded his diplomatic mission to China from 1792 to 1794, he gave a similar comment on the scientific development of the Chinese. He wrote "it was sufficiently apparent how much the Chinese, though skilful and dexterous in particular arts, were

the Chinese craftsmanship can also be assessed by his description of Emperor Kanghsi's presents for Peter the Great and the people in the Russian embassy. In terms of Kanghsi's presents for the Russian Czar, which comprised tapestries, enameled gold cups, japanned cups, silk cloth interwoven with five-clawed dragons, fans for ladies, Chinese paper, toys, Bell wittily concluded that "[f]rom these particulars it appears, that these two mighty monarchs were not very lavish in their presents to each other; preferring curiosities to things of real value."<sup>45</sup> As for the presents for the members of the Russian embassy, he further pinpoints the difference in the sense of value of the Chinese and the Europeans:

The presents, consisting of a complete Chinese dress, some pieces of damasks, and other stuffs, were, indeed, of no great value. They were, however, carried along the streets, wrapped up in yellow silk, with the usual parade of things belonging to the court; a circumstance which is reckoned one of the greatest honours that can be conferred on a foreign minister.<sup>46</sup>

Once again, though acknowledging that the Chinese preferred the symbolic to the actual value of presents, Bell esteemed the value of the imperial presents from a rather utilitarian perspective and suggested that what the Chinese could offer the Europeans seemed to be of little pragmatic value.

Just like many European visitors to China, Bell also paid a lot of attention to religion. However, he did not condemn the pagan idolatry practiced by the

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behind the Western nations in many philosophical and useful branches of science." See Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, vol. 2 (1797, Philadelphia: R. Campbell, 1799) 226-27.

<sup>45</sup> For a complete list of Kanghsi's presents for Peter the Great, see Bell 166. Kanghsi's presents from Peter the Great include furs, clocks, watches and an oil painting. See Bell 137.

<sup>46</sup> Bell 166. However, it is interesting to note that Bell regarded the Russian ambassador's presents for Kanghsi, in which several toys are included, are something of value, while the toys Kanghsi gives to Peter the Great are of no considerable value. He seems to prefer European toys to Chinese toys. For Ismayloff's presents for Kanghsi, see Bell 137.

common people in China. Instead, he only pointed out the situation as a given and then distinguished the idolaters from people of other religious beliefs, such as theists, Christians, Muslims and the atheists. Here is an example of his careful observation of the religions practiced in China:

As to the religion of the Chinese, I cannot pretend to give a distinct account of it. According to the best information I could procure, they are divided into several sects; among which, that of the Theists is the most rational and respectable. They worship one God, whom they call Tien, the Heaven or the highest Lord, and pay no religious homage to the images of their countrymen. This sect has subsisted for many ages longer than Christianity, and is still most in vogue; being embraced by the Emperor himself. And most of the grandees, and men of learning. The common people are generally idolaters. The few Jews and Mahometans, residing here, are supposed to have entered China about six or seven hundred years ago, in company with the western Tartars. There is a very inconsiderable sect, called Cross-worshippers. They worship the holy cross; but have lost all other marks of Christianity; which makes it probable the gospel was preached in this country before the arrival of the missionaries; but by whom is uncertain. The Christians, at present, are computed to amount to one hundred thousand, of both sexes. I have been told, the Chinese have also some Atheists among them.<sup>47</sup>

This lengthy passage reflects Bell's open-mindedness to various religious beliefs held by the Chinese. Being a Christian, he described the Chinese theists as "rational" and "respectful" and claimed the history of Chinese theism longer than that of Christianity, a fact not so many of his contemporaries were willing to admit.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bell 184-85.

<sup>48</sup> Seventeenth and eighteenth-century British writers with distinctive Christian backgrounds, such as William Nichols (1655-1716), a Church of England clergyman, and George Berkeley (1685-1753), a Church of Ireland bishop, are often to question the authenticity of Chinese multi-millennial history as claimed by Chinese historians and propagated by the Jesuits. They attacked the Chinese, whose reliance on Jesuits for calendrical modification is well-known in European academia, for their poor astrological knowledge and dismiss the longstanding history of China as unreliable. See Ge Guilu, *Wuwai de yuanyin—yingguo zuojia yu zhongguo wenhua* [Original title in English is *Distant Voices*

Elsewhere, except for regarding some images of idols as monstrous and the history of some mythological idols and saints as too absurd to be mentioned, he did not repudiate the common people of China for practicing idolatry. Instead, he thought “[t]hese priests were not at all superstitious, as appeared sufficiently from the little reverence they paid to their idols, and statues of reputed saints.”<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, he seems to praise the pagan monks for not being superstitious; nevertheless, on the other hand, he might possibly imply that the Chinese monks showed inadequate respect for the idols and statues which they worshiped as emblems of deities or spirits.

On the whole, Bell does not particularly find fault with the Chinese in his comprehensive account. Nevertheless, there were a couple of things in China that astonished him to a certain degree. One was the practice of abandoning newborn babies in the street, an inhumane practice done by the Chinese poor on a daily basis, as well as the conduct of eating lice found among the Chinese beggars.<sup>50</sup> On abandoning newborn babies, Bell reflects that:

I must, however, take notice of one shocking and unnatural practice;

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*beyond London: English Writers and Chinese Culture*] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 2002) 118-19, 121.

<sup>49</sup> Bell 123.

<sup>50</sup> Bell notes his experience of seeing a Chinese beggar eating lice as follows: “while walking through the street, I observed an old beggar picking vermin from his tattered cloaths, and putting them into his mouth; a practice, which, it seems, is very common among this class of people. When a Chinese and Tartar are angry at one another, the Tartar, in reproach, calls the Chinese louse-eater; and the latter, in return, calls the other fish-skin coat; because the Mantzur Tartars, who live near the river Amoor, subsist by fishing, and, in summer, wear coats made of the skins of fishes. But this habit is used only in summer; for, in winter, they wear furs.” This description about Chinese beggars eating lice is probably the earliest reference that can be found in English literary history. In his work, Staunton also noted that “[p]ersons not so opulent as to be delicate, are sometimes found to ransack every department of nature to satisfy their appetites. And even the vermin that prey upon uncleanly persons, have been known to serve as a prey in their turn to them.” See Staunton, vol. 2, 159. In his note for this reference of consuming vermin among the Chinese poor, the Chinese translator of Staunton’s itinerary Ye Duyi regarded Staunton’s story groundless as there was no Chinese record or hearsay ever mentioned the Chinese eating louses. See Ye’s *Yingshi yejian qianlong jishi* (Hongkong: Joint, 1994) 381. It is likely that Ye did not read Bell’s work when he translated Staunton’s itinerary into Chinese. Bell’s account therefore becomes an important reference to verify the reliability of Staunton’s observation.

which appears more extraordinary in a country so well regulated and governed as China. I mean, that of exposing so many new-born infants in the streets. This, indeed, is only done by the poor, who have more wives than they can maintain.<sup>51</sup>

This appalling description of an unmerciful deed practiced by the Chinese poor is one of the few negative things that incurs Bell's disfavour and damages the overall positive image of the Chinese in his narration.

Other rare negative characteristics of the Chinese mentioned in Bell's book are Kanghsi's personal, or possibly the Tartars', images of the Chinese, who now yielded obedience to a foreign throne. In one passage in which the writer describes why Kanghsi should keep the habit of going out to hunt with his sons and the Tartar nobles at such an advanced age, Bell reported that it is because the Tartar monarch wished to prevent his nomadic army from falling into idleness and effeminacy among the Chinese.<sup>52</sup> As usual, Bell does not comment on Kanghsi's evaluation of the characteristics of the Chinese, but leaves it to his readers to judge for themselves. Therefore, it has to be kept in mind that these two negative images of Chinese soldiers as idle and effeminate were judged by the Tartar monarch, rather than genuinely observed by Bell himself.

### **C. Bell's images of Emperor Kanghsi and the Chinese officials**

Due to the nature of Bell's mission to China, he had many chances to observe the Chinese officials or even the Emperor at a close distance. His account of the Chinese ruling classes therefore, in comparison to other accounts left by early British

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<sup>51</sup> Bell 183. In his itinerary Staunton provided a detailed account regarding why the Chinese poor abandoned newborn babies, mostly female ones, on the streets and how foreign missionaries adopted them and converted them into Christians. See Staunton, vol. 1, 39-40.

<sup>52</sup> For Kanghsi's other reasons of practicing hunting annually and how it was normally practiced, see Bell 169-72.

explorers and sailors<sup>53</sup> who visited only the southeastern coast of China for business purposes and whose acquaintances were either local officials or citizens, seems to reveal a rather different picture of the Chinese ruling classes. Being a member of a Russian embassy, Bell made the acquaintance of several Chinese officials, presumably men of distinction, and declared himself well entertained by them on many private occasions during his stay in Peking. In his account he praises the Chinese Master of Ceremonies as “a person of great politeness” and “a good friend to the Christians;”<sup>54</sup> the Prime Minister as “a great sportsman” and “an honest man.”<sup>55</sup> As for his image of Emperor Kanghsi, Bell attributes many favorable qualities to him. The emperor is praised as a man of humanity, good nature, affability, self-discipline, generous disposition and more than once referred as a philosopher.<sup>56</sup> Bell even refers to Kanghsi as “the good old Emperor” to show his favorable impression of this oriental monarch. In addition to these good characteristics, there was something else in Kanghsi that impressed Bell considerably. For instance, in dealing with the disputes between the Jesuits and the Dominicans over the “rites controversy,”<sup>57</sup> Kanghsi’s tolerance of foreign religion evokes a

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<sup>53</sup> Before Bell published his itinerary about his visit to China, three Englishmen have mentioned China in their individual books. They are William Dampier’s *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697), Alexander Hamilton’s *A New Account of the East Indies* (1727) and George Anson’s *A Voyage Round the World* (1748). None of these British visitors visited the capital of China in person.

<sup>54</sup> Bell 127.

<sup>55</sup> Bell 141.

<sup>56</sup> See Bell 138, 150, 155, 162-63 and 179 for specific descriptions.

<sup>57</sup> This “rites controversy” was started by Pope Clement XI’s Bull *Ex Illa Die* of March 1715, in which he repudiated the Jesuits’ tolerance of Chinese converts’ practice of paying tribute to their deceased parents or relations, a practice he considered next to idolatry. On hearing Clement XI’s bull in 1717, Kanghsi was so upset as to issue a prohibition to ban Christianity throughout his empire. Another bull of similar nature was issued by Clement XI in 1720 and it made Kanghsi decide to ban Christianity again in 1721, though he still allowed a number of missionaries to work in his court. Thereafter missionaries were not allowed to disseminate Christianity in public for more than one hundred years, until Emperor Tongzhi rescinded the prohibition in 1862. For more information about the Rites Controversy, see Stevenson’s note on 150-51; Guo Fuxiang and Zuo Yuanpo, *Zhongguo huangdi yu yangren* [Chinese Emperors and Foreigners] (Beijing: Shishi, 2001), 195-208; Zhang Guogang, *Cong zhongxi chushi dao liyizhizheng—mingqing chuanjiaoshi yu zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu* [From China First Encounter with Europe to Rites Controversy—Missionaries of Ming and Qing Dynasty and the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe] (Beijing: Renmin, 2003) 413-502.



rather positive impression on Bell:

The Emperor himself tried to make the parties compromise matters; but, finding his endeavours ineffectual, he left them to agree or dispute according to their pleasure. He inclined, indeed, to favour the opinion of the Jesuits, which he thought most reasonable. At any rate, it must be acknowledged an instance of uncommon condescension, for an heathen Emperor to interest himself so much in the peace of a Christian church.<sup>58</sup>

Lacking understanding of the moral and political significance embedded in the rites controversy, Bell naively assumed that Kanghsi was willing to let the Jesuits and the Dominicans settle their own disputes over the issue of paying tributes to ancestors open-mindedly and therefore applauded the Emperor's "uncommon condescension." This misunderstanding, or possibly intentional misreading, of Kanghsi's magnanimity to Christianity might probably mirror Bell's hope as a Christian of seeing an oriental heathen monarch favouring Christianity. Another episode which Bell notes to reflect Kanghsi's open-mindedness is his attitude to music of various origins. He reflects that "[t]he Emperor told the [the Russian] ambassador, that he knew well their musick [music] would not please an European ear; but that every nation liked their own best." Elsewhere Bell also remarks that China, under the rulership of Kanghsi, was an empire run by "prudent management and mild government."<sup>59</sup> If we summarize Bell's positive accounts of Kanghsi's

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<sup>58</sup> Bell 150. In fact, the reason for Kanghsi to favor the Jesuits was because paying tribute to deceased parents and relations was considered by the Chinese a practice of filial piety, a moral conduct which was much emphasized by the Confucianists. Being a follower and a defender of Confucian dogma himself as well as a monarch with ultimate authority, Kanghsi therefore could not stand Clement XI's provocative Bulls, which endangered the sense of morality of the Chinese and jeopardized his dictatorship over everything under his feet. It is rather the peaceful life of his subjects than the peace of the church that concerned Kanghsi. Bell seemed unable to see through the implication involved in the rites controversy, but willing to believe Kanghsi was interested in maintaining harmony between different Christian sects.

<sup>59</sup> Bell 177.

temperaments and his achievements, we may say that the image of Kanghsi is probably not far from the image of a philosopher king proposed by Plato.<sup>60</sup>

#### **D. Bell's self-images of the British and the Europeans**

It is interesting to note that when Bell took notes on the various characteristics of the Chinese and the Tartars, he often compared them to his fellow countrymen or even to contemporary Europeans at large. Hence, as he reflects on the similarities and differences of characteristics and temperament between the Chinese and Europeans, his work often more or less mirrors some self-images of his fellow countrymen or even Europeans in general.

In one passage in which Bell notes a grand royal banquet hosted by Kanghsi, he comments that the Chinese in many ways act differently from the Europeans. He said "[i]n this,<sup>61</sup> as in many other things, the behaviour of the Chinese is quite contrary to that of the Europeans."<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere he also mentioned that the order which the Chinese consumed their dishes and the way the Chinese laid a dining table are both very different from those of the Europeans:

We were first entertained with tea, and a dram of hot arrack; after which supper was brought, and placed on the tables, without either table-cloth, napkins, knives, or forks. Instead of forks, were laid down, to every person, a couple of ivory-sticks, with which the Chinese take up their meat.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In his *Sept Discours en Vers sur l'Homme* (1738, translated into English in 1759 by Thomas Nugent under the title *An Essay on Universal History*), Voltaire also mentioned that philosophical characteristics were often attributed to Chinese emperors. He said "The emperor has been high pontif[f] time immemorial, it is he who sacrifices to *Tien*, the supreme ruler of heaven and earth: he is considered also as the first philosopher in the empire; and his edicts are generally instructions and lessons of morality." See Voltaire, *An Essay on Universal History*, vol. 1 (London, 1759) 22, 15 Nov. 2005 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>61</sup> The Chinese habit of serving dessert before the main dishes, see Bell 136.

<sup>62</sup> Bell 136. In another instance Bell recalled the contrary ideas about places of honour at an imperial audience held by the Chinese and the Europeans. He said "[a]s the customs of the Chinese are, in many instances, quite contrary to those of the Europeans; so, I have been informed, that, among them, the left hand is the place of greatest honour." See Bell 161.

<sup>63</sup> Bell 119.

Despite the difference in dining customs, Bell seldom complains of the inconvenience he and his companions had experienced or criticizes the Chinese way of dining.<sup>64</sup> Instead, he only describes the Chinese customs and habits which he has seen or experienced in a most impartial way. He recognizes there were cultural differences between China and Europe, but he does not adopt any preoccupied standard to glorify his own culture and then to attack the foreign one.

Even if there are many cultural differences between the British and the Chinese, Bell notes many similarities as well. For instance, he perceived that the British liking for cock-fighting was as strong as the Chinese fondness for quail-fighting, though this sport was usually found only among the vulgar in England.<sup>65</sup> Elsewhere he also mentions “[t]hese people [the Chinese] expose their gold and silver, and other goods of value, with as much freedom and security, as the merchants do in London or Amsterdam.”<sup>66</sup> Hence, as far as the customs and habits of the Chinese and the Europeans are concerned, Bell seems to regard the Chinese as no less civilized than his fellow Europeans, though their individual customs and habits may differ from each other’s.

Nevertheless, when Bell examines the natural resources of China and the possible profit of exporting Chinese products to Europe, his awareness of being a

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<sup>64</sup> Except for complaining that the food was served cold once, due to it being sent directly from the dining tables of Kanghsi to the lodging of the Russian embassy located out of the palace, Bell never complains about the quality or quantity of the entertainment. His objective attitude to Chinese customs can also be identified in the passage in which he describes how the Chinese practice kowtow to Kanghsi. He said “The Chinese made their bows, as is usual on such occasions; but we were permitted to make our compliments in our own fashion. It seemed somewhat strange to a Briton, to see some thousands of people upon their knees, and bowing their heads to the ground, in most humble posture, to a mortal like themselves.” See Bell 161. In this case Bell does not make a moral or political judgment on the behaviour of the Chinese with a preoccupied conception. He only considers it an exotic ritual performed by people from a different cultural background.

<sup>65</sup> Bell highlights that the sport of quail-fighting was conducted at a Mandarin’s house, while cock-fighting was generally considered a vulgar sport in England and therefore not to be found among the British gentry. See Bell 122.

<sup>66</sup> Bell 152.

citizen of a colonizing nation emerges. For instance, in one passage where he mentions the possibility of planting some Chinese crops in America and Europe, he notes "I doubt not, that, with due case, some others of the rare fruits and plants in this country, even tea itself, might be propagated in Europe, or in some of the American colonies."<sup>67</sup> Elsewhere he also suggests that huge profits might be made by importing Chinese tea into Europe<sup>68</sup> and Chinese businessmen of china-ware would certainly beat their European competitors by their low prices.<sup>69</sup> These insightful insights into the commercial prospects for Europe, in one way reflect the narrator's broad and long view of the international business market; in another way, they also mirror the international role and status of Bell's home country, a colonizing nation that later would conquer foreign lands and manipulate global markets. Therefore, the reference to British colonies in America more or less reminds readers that, in contrast to China's isolation,<sup>70</sup> Britain was aggressively expanding its territory to all continents of the world.<sup>71</sup> From Bell's references to American colonies and European settlements in India we may say that he was probably proud to consider himself and his fellow countrymen citizens of a prosperous European country.

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<sup>67</sup> Bell 156. In 1793, British ambassador Lord Marcartney asked for some tea tree samples from the escorting Chinese officials *en route* back to England and his request was kindly granted by the latter. He then brought the tea trees to Bengal and had them planted by professional hands. Years later, Bengal and India gradually replaced China and became major places of tea production for British tea market. See Staunton, vol. 2, 193.

<sup>68</sup> Bell observed that "[t]he high rates, at which tea is sold in Europe, are a little surprising considering the prices in China. For, at Peking, the price of the cheapest tea, either green or bohea [black-tea], is half an ounce of silver the Chinese pound; which is equal to what it would be at two shillings a-pound in England. And allowing the freight and duties to be high, yet the profits seem somewhat extravagant." See Bell 181-82.

<sup>69</sup> Bell is very keen to know the secret of making porcelain, so he visits some China factories in Peking more than once. See Bell 159-60, 167.

<sup>70</sup> Bell analyzed several geographical factors that enabled China to maintain its isolation from the world for some centuries and concluded that the only possible invader might come from the north, the Russians. See Bell 180-81.

<sup>71</sup> Aside from referring to British colonies in America, Bell also mentions some "European settlements in India" as he described the third son of Kanghsi traveling in a man-carried vehicle called a palankin. See Bell 121.

## E. Summary

Bell seems to have a very positive impression about the citizens of this Oriental empire. He attributes many good characteristics to them and even suggests that his own fellow Europeans should follow the examples of the Chinese in practicing filial piety and showing more respect for women of all ranks. Besides, he often compares his fellow Englishmen or Europeans to the Chinese and indicates that many similar human traits can be found on both parties. His account therefore suggests that the Chinese were, generally speaking, as civilized as the British in terms of their ways of living in the early eighteenth century.

However, when we come to examine the national image of the Chinese and their empire as a whole, especially in comparison with the self-images of the narrator's own country, a different picture emerges. Due to enjoying a peaceful relationship with most of her neighbouring countries and facing no immediate threats from home or abroad in the early eighteenth century, the Chinese government showed little motivation to improve their armaments and consequently their scientific and technological developments gradually fell into stagnancy.<sup>72</sup> Bell's description of the natural boundaries of China's territory shows that China was seen as an isolated nation occupying a large piece of land in east Asia, while England was using its advanced developments in science and technology to colonize foreign lands. Consequently, in the eyes of Bell, though there were many admirable characteristics found in the people of China, the national image of China might not look as

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<sup>72</sup> In one conversation exchanged with Emperor Kanghsi's general of the artillery, Bell noted the Chinese had already used gun-powder in artificial fireworks for more than two thousand years, but its employment on the battlefields was of a late introduction. This illustrated that the scientific development of the Chinese not only fell behind the Europeans but also remained stagnant for centuries. This concept of stagnancy was repeated by later writers and gradually became a distinctive image of the Chinese civilization thereafter. For Bell's account about the artillery development of the Chinese, see Bell 153. Bell's comment on China's backward scientific development was shared by his contemporary countrymen, such as William Wotton (1666-1722), Francis Lockier (1667-1740) and George Berkeley (1685-1753), who happened to be all clergymen. For their criticism on Chinese astrology, calendrical system, institutions, medication, language, morality, religion, see Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 115-23.

favourable as the general image of her people. Unfortunately, it is this negative image of scientific stagnancy of China, rather the positive descriptions about the humanity and temperament of the Chinese public, that appealed to more British writers in generations to come.<sup>73</sup>

#### IV. The first British official report of China: George Staunton's *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*

During the reigns of Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1603-1625), the British government dispatched several embassies to China, but none of them reached the capital and met the Chinese emperor in person.<sup>74</sup> On 26 September 1792 George Macartney (1737-1806), authorized by George III (1760-1801) and Henry Dundas (1742-1811), then Secretary of State, embarked in a sixty-four gun ship, the *Lion*, and made sail for China. On 14 September 1793, Macartney and a small number of his embassy were presented to Emperor Qianlong. However, one week after Macartney arrived in Peking, he received a dismissal from the premier Heshan, who told the former that no foreign ambassadors or representatives had been allowed to reside permanently in the capital before and consequently his request of residing in Peking was rejected by the emperor.<sup>75</sup> In early October 1793 the embassy left Peking and travelled inland to Canton. The embassy left Macao on 17 March 1794

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<sup>73</sup> Among the writers who showed contempt for Chinese civilization and morality we see Samuel Johnson, George Staunton, John Barrow, Andrew Cherry, George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, Charles Dickson, Charles Henry Pearson and Guy Boothby. By contrast, only a few British writers ever showed appreciation for Chinese culture and customs in their works after Bell, especially after the Opium Wars (1839-42, 1856-60). These rare British writers include Thomas Carlyle, Walter Savage Landor and Oscar Wilde. For individual writer's comments on Chinese culture and customs, see Ge, *Wu wai de yuanyin*, 260-323 and *Zhongying wenxue guanxi biannianshi* [A Chronology of Chinese-English Literary Relation] (Shanghai: Sanlian, 2004) 64-65, 68-71, 75-81, 94, 99-100, 112-14, 116-18; Luo Tian trans., "Shijiu shiji xifang wenxu zhong de zhongguo xingxiang" [L'image du Chinois dans la littérature occidentale au XIXe siècle], by Muriel Détrie, *Biajiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 241-62.

<sup>74</sup> See Staunton, vol. 1, 2-6.

<sup>75</sup> See Roland Thorne, "Macartney, George, Earl Macartney (1737-1806)." *Oxford DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 15 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17341>>.

and then arrived in Portsmouth on 6 September 1794.<sup>76</sup> As this embassy was the first British embassy that was successfully received by the emperor of China, it immediately aroused the British public's interest in the mission. Observing the high demand for information about the embassy, Aeneas Anderson, a valet to the Ambassador,<sup>77</sup> published *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China, in the Years 1792, 1793 and 1794* in 1795. The official version of the embassy was not available until George Staunton, using the diaries of Macartney, published his *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* in 1797. As the latter was the only official version of the embassy, its popularity soon surpassed all other versions that appeared prior to it. Within a few years the translations of the book were available in most European languages. For instance, a French and a German version were both released in 1798, while a Dutch version in 1798-1801. There were 15 versions in total available in seven European countries and America from 1797 to 1832.<sup>78</sup>

Before proceeding to discuss the alter-images of the Chinese and the self-images of the British in this book, I would like to highlight some characteristics. First, Macartney had read a lot of accounts about his destination before he headed for China,<sup>79</sup> so his mind was, therefore, likely filled with many tales and stereotypical

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<sup>76</sup> See Staunton, vol. 2, 258, 267.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson listed himself as a chief-mate of the *Lion* in his own *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China, in the years 1792, 1793, and 1794*; however, it is more likely that he was a valet to Macartney. See Aeneas Anderson, *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China, in the Years 1792, 1793, and 1794* (London, 1795) xv, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 15 Sept. 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>; Peyrefitte xxii, 555.

<sup>78</sup> See Huang, "Long yu shi duiwang de shijie" 275.

<sup>79</sup> Spence suggested that the works that Macartney had read about China included the travel accounts of George Anson and John Bell, the four-volume history of China by Jean du Halde, and the philosophical reflections on China by Leibniz and Voltaire, the latter happening to be a friend of the ambassador. See Spence, *Chan's Great Continent* 56. While in the appendix to his China journal Macartney declared that "[b]efore I set out upon my Embassy to China, I perused all the books that had been written about the country in all the languages I could understand. With everybody from whom I had hopes of information I endeavoured to converse, and where that could not be done I corresponded with them by letter." In this appendix Macartney mentioned that he also read Polo's work. See Helen H. Robbins, *Our First Ambassador to China: An Account of the Life of George, Earl of Macartney* (London: John Murray, 1908) 394, 411.

images of the Chinese. Under this premise, his journey in China consequently offered him a chance to verify the authenticity of his materials. Second, being one of the core figures of the embassy, Macartney was able to see many aspects of Chinese life that were not accessible to other members of the embassy. His account, therefore, tended to cover more aspects of the Chinese than other narratives. Third, like most other travelers, Macartney also used his own culture as a yardstick to evaluate the Chinese, his accounts therefore tend to show his own preoccupations. Fourth, before Macartney was appointed ambassador, he held a number of political positions in the government and elsewhere, such as an Envoy Extraordinary to Russia (1764-1767), Chief Secretary in Ireland (1769-1776) and Governor of Madras (1781-1785).<sup>80</sup>

Macartney's observation of the Chinese government and the general public is a comprehensive one and consequently it gives its readers an encyclopedic account about nearly every aspect of the Chinese life. He was watching the Chinese through the lens of a colonial administrator of the British Empire, a diplomat from the most powerful country in the globe and a mercantilist. Hence, anything against his assertions or beliefs were likely be repudiated by him as backward, inferior, negative or simply stupid. In the journal which he kept during his stay in China, he once noted that "nothing could be more fallacious than to judge of China by any European standard."<sup>81</sup> The paradox embedded in this statement is that if he did not adopt a European standard to judge the Chinese, what standard would he apply? As no one is likely to get rid of certain core values of one's own society, which gives one a reference to define oneself and to differentiate oneself from others, it is therefore unlikely for one not to judge others from a familiar value system. Hence,

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<sup>80</sup> See Robbins 15, 56, 119

<sup>81</sup> The passage was noted in a diary, dated 15 January 1794. See Helen H. Robbins 392.



Macartney's motto may sound reasonable at first glance, it is nevertheless an unattainable standard for most writers. It may even sound ironic when we compare it to what he has said in his description about the Chinese.

As suggested, Macartney's depictions of the Chinese are conditioned by his preconceptions. In terms of its commercial and diplomatic achievements, his embassy is a failure. This may contribute to his antipathy towards the Chinese to certain degree. His overall images of the Chinese, therefore, tend to show more contempt than appreciation. We may start with his self-images to get a glimpse of his attitude. Macartney hoped that the Chinese government would receive his embassy with due respect when he set out in 1792. In fact, from diaries, letters, memoir and reports he emerges as a person who constantly reminded himself and members of his embassy that Britain was 'the first Sovereign of the Western World,' which in Europe is a 'civilized, ingenious, and powerful nation.'<sup>82</sup> In the list of presents for Emperor Qianlong, Macartney also claimed that 'His Britannic Majesty, who is acknowledged by the rest of Europe to be the first maritime power, and is truly sovereign of the sea.'<sup>83</sup> This luminous self-image of England was what Macartney wished Qianlong and his imperial officials would be able to recognize during his short stay in China. He considered his own country a civilized, ingenious and powerful nation, whose naval force was likely to find no match in the world. However, his highly regarded self-images were incomprehensible to the Chinese as the visitors were defined as tribute-bearers even before they stepped on the soil of China. This frustration was likely to contribute his negative evaluation of the Chinese.

In his account of the Chinese, Macartney suggested that they were generally

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<sup>82</sup> Robbins 257, 293.

<sup>83</sup> Staunton, vol. 1, 245.

arrogant,<sup>84</sup> hypocritical,<sup>85</sup> ignorant<sup>86</sup> and superstitious.<sup>87</sup> As for their intellectual developments, the British ambassador also barely had anything good to say about it. He suggested that their science was far behind the Europeans,<sup>88</sup> their physic backward,<sup>89</sup> and the country was basically in a stagnant state because they seemed to have made no progress over the past hundreds of years.<sup>90</sup> Investigating the military strength of China seems to be one of Macartney's errands,<sup>91</sup> he therefore left many notes on the Chinese soldiers and their arms in his account. He

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<sup>84</sup> Staunton noted that "The court of Pekin was understood to be guided by maxims peculiar to itself; little fond of a promiscuous intercourse with foreign states, and inclined, in some measure, to consider its subjects as placed in the vale of happiness, where it was to seclude them from a profane admixture with other men." See Staunton, vol. 1, 12.

<sup>85</sup> Staunton noted that "[t]he exterior demeanour [sic] of the Chinese, is indeed, very ceremonious. It consists of various evolutions of the body, and inclinations of the head, in bending or stiffening the knee, and in joining and disengaging the hands; all which are considered as the perfection of good breeding and deportment; while the nations who are not expert in such discipline are thought to be little better than barbarians. When, however, those Chinese ceremonies are once shewn off, the performers of them relapse into ease and familiarity. In their address to strangers, they are not restrained by any bashfulness; but present themselves with an easy confident air, as if they considered themselves as the superiors, and as if nothing in their manners or appearance could be deficient or inaccurate." He then suggested that it was because all their neighbouring countries were inferior to the Chinese. See Staunton, vol. 2, 216.

<sup>86</sup> Staunton noted a story about the British presents circulated in the Chinese. He said "Of the animals that were brought, it was gravely mentioned, that there was an elephant of the size of a monkey, and as fierce as a lion; and a cock that fed on charcoal. Everything was supposed to vary from what had been seen in Pekin before, and to possess qualities different from what had been there experienced in the same substances." See Staunton, vol. 2, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Staunton noted that "No people are, in fact, more superstitious than the common Chinese." See Staunton, vol. 2, 12. Elsewhere he also mocked the Chinese for believing in the Taoist magic figures by saying that "Drawings of the same kind [the *Men-shin*, or guardian spirit of a place] are, indeed, with a similar intention, pai[n]ted on the outer and inner doors of most of the private dwellings of the Chinese. The common people, conscious of the numerous ills to which they are liable, are disposed to seek for safe-guards on every side. Their minds being once open to credulity, are ready to accept any supernatural assistance, offered to them by a new religion, against the violence of power, or the calamities of nature." See Staunton, vol. 2, 135.

<sup>88</sup> See Staunton, vol. 2, 226-27.

<sup>89</sup> Macartney observed that many practitioners of physic often take the advantage of people's ignorance and credulity to reap a profit. See Staunton, vol. 2, 227-29.

<sup>90</sup> Macartney suggested that the civilization of China seems to have reached its zenith in the fifteenth century and remained unimproved ever afterwards. He indicates that "Before the period of the Mongol invasion of their country, in the midst of the dark ages of Europe, when China was visited by Marco Polo, the natives of it had already reached their highest pitch of civilization, in which they were certainly much superior to their conquerors, as well as to their European contemporaries; but not having since advanced, whilst the nations of Europe have been every day improving in manners, and in arts and knowledge of every kind, the Chinese are seen by the latter with less admiring eyes than they were by the first travelers who gave accounts of them." See Staunton, vol. 2, 216-17.

<sup>91</sup> The one who is responsible for assessing the military strength of China is Lieutenant Henry William Parish. He conducted a number of careful surveys of the dimensions and structures of some Chinese forts, the Great Wall and the artillery available to the Chinese troops. See Staunton, vol. 2, 50-60.

mentioned that the Chinese soldiers often carried fans<sup>92</sup> and looked feminine. He once ridiculed them that

Troops were already drawn out before the temple in various uniforms, some of them fanciful indeed and picturesque, but apparently, at least, more suitable for the stage than a field of battle. Quilted petticoats and jackets, and satin boots with thick soles of paper, leave a mixture of clumsiness and effeminacy, seemingly little calculated for a military life; but this holy mansion was sufficiently safe, under the more powerful protection of the *Men-shin*, or guardian spirit of the place, of which the effigy, painted upon the outer gate, was supposed effectually to prevent the opposite spirit of evil from entering within it.<sup>93</sup>

Ridiculing that the Chinese soldiers were less reliable than the painting of the guardian spirits on the door, Macartney had presented a very negative picture of them. His underestimation of the Chinese soldiers was, to certain degree, in accordance with his evaluation of the Chinese artillery.

In contrast to the negative images of the Chinese, Macartney attributed many positive images to his country and fellow countrymen. He suggested that the civilization of England, or even Europe as a whole, was far more advanced than that of China. It is probably based upon his negative evaluation of the industrial science of the Chinese. As mentioned in my discussion of Anson's images of the Chinese, the British were inclined to judge the civilization of the "Other" by the development of their industrial science. It seems that Macartney was no exception to this custom. Hence, in his account about the industrial science of his own country, he showed his confidence in its superiority and tended to consider other countries as backward or less civilized. In addition, Macartney also suggested that the British were superior

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<sup>92</sup> Staunton, vol. 1, 269-70.

<sup>93</sup> Staunton, vol. 2, 135.

to the Chinese in aspects like astrology, commerce, military force, morality, natural science and physics.

However, Macartney's images of the Chinese were not completely negative. For instance, he once praised the attentiveness and courtesy of the Chinese. He suggested that

The mandarins were, on every occasion, attentive to the accommodation of the passengers [sic]. Even the Chinese soldiers and sailors displayed a gentleness of deportment, and a willingness to oblige, distinguishable from the mere execution of a duty; and which showed that the present strangers at least, were not unwelcome. These strangers were, indeed, announced as coming from afar to pay a compliment to their sovereign; and the lowest of the Chinese were not so depressed as to be insensible of some national gratification on that account.<sup>94</sup>

Similar compliments on the courtesy of the Chinese can also be found in a number of passages. Elsewhere in his comparison of the character between the Tartars and the Chinese, he also suggested that something positive could be found in the latter. He says

A military life is much more the bent of a Tartar than of a Chinese. The hardy education, the rough manners, the active spirit, the wandering disposition, the loose principles, the irregular conduct of the former, fit him better for the profession, practice, and pursuits of war, than the calm, regulated, domestic, philosophical, and moral habits of the latter. Warriors seem more naturally the offspring of Tartary, as literati are of China. The latter are chiefly conversant in the sciences of morals, and of the policy of government, which are often united in the contemplation, and in the works, of their lawgivers and philosophers.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Staunton, vol. 1, 264.

<sup>95</sup> Staunton, vol. 2, 236.

This eulogy on the character of the Chinese suggests that the failure of his mission did not blind Macartney's judgment and push him into a hysterical state. He was still willing to do the Chinese justice whenever appropriate and necessary. Besides, he also compared the character of the Chinese mandarins to those of the Europeans and indicated that:

In seeking out for the nearest resemblance between these persons and Europeans, the character of gentlemen of rank in France, while monarchy subsisted there, occurred readily to the mind. An engaging urbanity of manners, instantaneous familiarity, ready communicativeness, together with a sense of self-apprrobation, and the vanity of national superiority, piercing through every disguise, seemed to constitute their character.<sup>96</sup>

Hence, readers of his travel account could not only find negative pictures of the Chinese, but also positive ones. Macartney did not negate every characteristic found in the Chinese indiscriminately. Under certain conditions, he was ready to praise the Chinese as good companions and serviceable.

There are similarities between Anson and Macartney's narratives. Both used the military superiority of their own country as a yardstick to measure the civilization of the Chinese and both considered China a backward country that could be easily defeated by England. As both were Christians, they naturally regarded the Chinese as a superstitious people whom were supposed to be enlightened by the Christians. Both were willing to give positive credit to a small number of Chinese if the latter ones were friendly or helpful to the British visitors. All three works discussed in this chapter show that British images of the Chinese were mostly in accordance with the growth of power of England in the eighteenth century. As England's military power was getting stronger and stronger, so did its contempt for

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<sup>96</sup> Staunton, vol. 1, 273-74.

China and the Chinese.

## Chapter Four

### Chinese Images of Britain and the British before the First Opium War

#### I. Early Chinese images of the British before 1793

Anyone interested in Chinese images of foreigners could do worse than to adopt John King Fairbank's famous argument about China's traditional "tribute-bearing system,"<sup>1</sup> which might then lead to the conclusion that the people of imperial China always regarded all foreigners as less-civilized or barbarous creatures. Over the decades, Fairbank's view was rarely questioned and it seems that many later scholars still find his idea handy to interpret the international relationship between China and her neighbouring countries. However, the proposition that people of the imperial China always regarded all foreigners as barbarians or savages has been challenged. For instance, in his "On Sinocentrism: A Critique" Tan Chung disputes Fairbank's practice of equating the meaning of *Yi* with "barbarian." He indicates a fallacy in Fairbank's theory by considering different etymological meanings of *Yi* and several other related Chinese characters and phrases<sup>2</sup> and then illuminating many cases of Chinese intellectuals' esteem for

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<sup>1</sup> Fairbank's theory of China's "tribute-bearing system" comprised a complicated and synthetic analysis of Imperial China's conventional cultural, diplomatic, economic and political models. The key tone of this theory was that before her door was forced to open to the Western powers in the nineteenth century, China always assumed herself as the centre of the world and consequently regarded all the other countries as inferiors. On this premise, all the foreign subjects were expected to bring tribute to the emperors of China to proclaim their submission to the one and only communal master of the world, while this conjoint leader of the world was entitled to provide protection and supply to maintain the longevity of the subjected states and countries at his mercy. Placing this "tribute-bearing system" at the centre of his argument about Imperial China's diplomatic intercourse with foreign powers, Fairbank chose the word "barbarian" as a synonym for the Chinese word *Yi* and assumed that all foreigners were indiscriminately considered as "barbarians" by most Chinese intellectuals and ruling classes. For more specific information about Fairbank's theory of China's "tribute-bearing system," see his *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1953) 8-13, 26-38.

<sup>2</sup> Tan points out that Ssu-Yu Teng, Jeremy Ingalls (1956) and Immanuel C. Y. Hsu (1960) have rendered the word *Wang* [king] in Confucius's texts and *Shijing*, the Book of Odes, into emperor. However, Confucius died in 479 BC and the first autocratic government did not appear in China until 221 BC, around two hundred and fifty-eight years later. Besides, Mencius (372-228 BC) summed up Confucius's political ideology with a bi-syllabic term *Wangdao* [virtuous rulership] and proposed

those highly-developed cultures created by several neighbouring *Yi* states or countries, such as India and the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> He then concludes that

[T]he theory of sinocentrism has very much exaggerated China's cultural eccentricity, and overlooked the basic fact that she has existed, under different sociopolitical systems, as an economic, social, political and cultural entity like any other nation state. Those who harp on this theory lack deeper understanding of the dynamics of China's internal development. . . . The ghost of sinocentrism served to justify Western imperialist aggression on China.<sup>4</sup>

Here Tan suggests that so-called sinocentrism is a theory developed by the Western countries to accuse the Chinese for not incorporating their country into the world order recognized by the Westerners. The theory contains a preconceived logic against the Chinese and is used by the Western imperialists to sugarcoat the nature of their economic and military aggression.

In her "Legislating the Universal: The Circulation of International Law in the Nineteenth Century," Lydia H. Liu examined several early western sinologists' translations of the Chinese character *Yi* and highlighted some political factors to explain why the very early English translation of *Yi* "foreign" was supplanted by "barbarous" and "barbarian" by several well-known authoritative scholars from Britain.<sup>5</sup> Based upon a careful study of diplomatic correspondence between the

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its opposite orientation as *Badao* [power-politics or big-power hegemony]. These two terms were nevertheless rendered by Derk Bodde (1937) as kingly-way and lordly-way. Similar misinterpretations and mistranslations can also be found in the translations of words like *Tianzi* [literally the Son of Heaven], *Tianxia* [all under Heaven] and *Zhongguo* [central state]. Misinterpretations of these terminology, claims Tan, often created an impression that the Chinese traditionally looked down upon foreigners. See Tan Chung, *Triton and Dragon: Studies on Nineteenth-Century China and Imperialism* (Delhi: Gian, 1986) 51-66.

<sup>3</sup> See Tan 66-77.

<sup>4</sup> Tan 105, 109.

<sup>5</sup> Liu points out that in the early correspondence between Britain and China, the word *yi* was usually equated with "foreigner" or "stranger" in English. Even in the first Chinese-English lexicon, accomplished by Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society in 1815, *yi* was glossed as "foreign," while *yiren* considered a respectable term for "foreigner." It is after the fiasco of the



governments of Qing China and Britain, written in Chinese and English, Liu suggests that one of the reasons why some British intellectuals, particularly those members of Parliament who strongly approved the Opium War, considered themselves insulted by being called *Yinyi* [English barbarians] by the Chinese bureaucrat in fact resulted from a vicious manipulation of translation. This mistranslation of *Yi* not only broadened the diplomatic gap between the British government and the court of Qing China, but also, to a certain extent, made the first Opium War possible.<sup>6</sup>

Based upon his study of China's "Bing li" [Guest Ritual], James L. Hevia also regarded Fairbank's translation of *Yi* inappropriate and misleading, declaring:

[T]he foreign lord and the population he [Emperor of China] commands are organized under what appears to be a generic heading of *yi*, rendered as "the foreign peoples" above. Usually it is glossed as "barbarians." I believe, however, that in the context of Guest Ritual the latter translation is somewhat misleading, particularly when other sources indicate that the purpose of the rite was to bring close (*qin*) other domains (*yi binli bangguo*; e.g., WLTK, 220:1a). As a noun, *qin* is translated as family or relative. Here, however, it is used as a verb meaning "to love," "to be close to," as one would be toward one's own relatives. In either case, the use of this term, along with others that

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Napier mission (1834) that Morrison decided to equate *yi* with "barbarian." Ever since then most English translations of the word *yi* are glossed as barbarian, including the authoritative *Cambridge History of China* (1978-1998). See Lydia H. Liu, "Legislating the Universal: The Circulation of International Law in the Nineteenth Century," *Token of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed. Lydia H. Liu (Durham: Duke UP, 1999) 131-33.

<sup>6</sup> See Liu, "Legislating the Universal" 133-34. Liu further suggests that "In fact, these translators were entirely responsible for making the word *yi* an exclusive equivalent of "barbarian" and fixing that equivalence as is still very much honoured by Western historians. If the curious translation suggests a strange, masochistic self-image of the "barbarian" that the British insisted on projecting onto themselves by fantasizing a sinocentric worldview, I must point out that it has been one of the most tragic and costly fabrications in modern diplomatic history. . . ." See Liu, "Legislating the Universal" 133. Regarding this misinterpretation of "yi" Tang also remarked that "The English version of Emperor Qianlong's (1736-1795) letter to King George III of Britain (first rendered into Latin by the Jesuits and then translated into English by Englishmen), which was shown to King George and other British authorities, has no allusion to "barbarian", although the word *Yi* appears in the original text fifteen times. This means that to the translators *Yi* was an innocent and simple expression equivalent to the English word "foreign". See Tan 77.

refer to showing compassion for lesser lords or cherishing them, seem to be pointing toward a process of inclusion, rather than one designed to affirm a dichotomy such as civilization and barbarism.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, if one adopts Fairbank's interpretation of the word *Yi* to investigate the imagined "interdomainal relations"<sup>8</sup> between imperial China and other lords of the world, one will certainly find oneself being trapped in a dialectical quagmire. If we accept Fairbank's interpretation of China's tribute-bearing system as a correct inference, which implies that the emperors of China and their courtiers regarded all foreigners as barbarians and accordingly their cultures and customs debased, why then do we find many cases in the history of China that show the ruling hierarchy of imperial China are keen to set up complicated rules to prudently greet those barbarians in the imperial courts and to dispatch well-educated intellectuals to learn their barbaric wisdom, as was the case of translating numerous Indian Buddhist scriptures into Chinese?<sup>9</sup> According to Hevia's research into China's *bing li* [賓禮], the guest protocol, which explains how to receive foreign diplomats with due courtesy and respect, there is no evidence to suggest that the Chinese looked down upon their guests. He indicates that many rulers of these so-called "barbarians," in Fairbank's sense, were indeed treated with respect and their presence at China's court was highly esteemed by the Chinese emperors and their courtiers.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 120-21.

<sup>8</sup> Hevia called early Qing China's intercourse with other countries as "interdomainal relations," instead of "international relations" because Marcartney's visit to the court of China served to reveal that early Qing China's governmental officials of foreign affairs had absolutely no idea of the modes of contemporary western diplomacy. For more of Hevia's elaboration about Qing China's "interdomainal relations," see his *Cherishing Men from Afar* 11, 27-28.

<sup>9</sup> Hevia 39-40. Tan also indicates that "between 357 and 731, the Chinese recorded 54 tributary missions from India. But this never placed India in an inferior position in China's worldview. On the contrary, it promoted Sino-Indian cultural exchange and strengthened India's grip on Chinese imagination and admiration. It was during this period that Chinese reverence for India reached its zenith." He adds that the Chinese not only adopted the concept of "paradise" from India, but also identified India (the country of the Buddha) as the paradise. See Tan 101.

<sup>10</sup> Hevia 42-49.

Therefore, Hevia suggests that it seems more reasonable to equate *Yi* with “foreigner,” rather “barbarian.”

Then, what were the Chinese images of early British visitors to China from the mid-seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century, and did they correspond to the negative images that some British politicians claimed were held by Chinese officials at the dawn of the first Opium War? This section will examine several Chinese and English texts to present some of the images of the British, which were in circulation in imperial China when she confronted the Western visitors at an early stage.

## II. A historical review of early intercourse between Britain and China

Before the imperial court of Qing China received the first special British envoy led by Lord Macartney in 1793,<sup>11</sup> many British seamen had already visited the southeastern coasts of China, particularly Canton and Macao. However, due to their poor knowledge of the world as well as the likeness in appearance between the British and other Europeans from Portugal, Spain and Holland, local Chinese officials and villagers could not distinguish between them but indiscriminately called all of them *Hongmao fan* or *Hongmao yi*, which meant “red-haired foreigner” literally. In fact, local people of Canton adopted these appellatives to refer to visitors from Portugal and Britain simply because the distinctive red hair or red beards of the Europeans.<sup>12</sup> For instance, four British merchantmen visited Macao and Guangzhou in 1637 and clashed with the Chinese forces a number of times as

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<sup>11</sup> Lord Macartney’s embassy to China was the first successful British deputation that was received by the emperor of China in history. Before that, Queen Elizabeth I also tried to establish some kind of diplomatic relationship with China and wrote a letter to the emperor of China to probe the possibility in 1596. However, this letter never reached the imperial court of Min China for the ship of this delegation was believed to be captured by some Portuguese warships on its outbound journey to China. See Gong, “Yapian zhanzheng qian zhongguoren dui yingguo de renshi,” *Dongxi jiaoliu luntan*, ed. Huang Shijian (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1998) 236.

<sup>12</sup> Gong 237-38.

they made their way into the harbour of Guangzhou. However, as these combats were recorded in various texts, such as *Mingshi* [History of Ming Dynasty, 1739], Yin Guangren and Zhang Rulin's *Aomen jilue* [A Brief History of Macao, 1800] and Liang Tingnan's *Yue haiguan zhi* [History of Guangzhou Custom Administration, 1839], the Chinese authors mistakenly believed that their countrymen were fighting against the Dutch. This error was not discovered and corrected until Xia Xie published his *Zhongxi jishi* [Event Notes of China's Diplomacy] in 1865, almost two hundred and thirty years later.<sup>13</sup>

Before Lord Macartney was appointed by George III to visit China at the end of the eighteenth century, Chinese intellectuals knew very little about Britain and her people, though some of the early European priests residing in China had already indicated her general geographical location on several world maps which they produced for the emperors of China. For instance, in Matteo Ricci's *Kunyu wanguo quantu* [Map of the World, 1602], the British Isles were indicated on the map and the Latin name of England "Anglia" was transliterated into Chinese as "*An è li ya*."<sup>14</sup> However, possibly because Britain was a comparatively less powerful European country than Spain, Portugal or Holland in the early seventeenth century and there was no British priest serving at the imperial court to introduce his country to the

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<sup>13</sup> See Gong 237-38.

<sup>14</sup> In his "Yapian zhanzheng qian zhongguoren dui yingguo de renshi" Gong assumed the word England was transliterated into Chinese as *An è li ya* and Scotland as *Shi ke qi ya* by Matteo Ricci. However, it seems more likely that the terms Matteo Ricci had in mind were "Anglia" and "Scotia," rather than "England" and "Scotland," as the former two words were Latin names for the later two English ones and therefore more likely to be used by Jesuits like Matteo Ricci and his colleagues. This may also explain why Matteo Ricci's transliteration of Anglia was adopted by other missionaries like Jules Aleni in his *Zhifang waiji* [World Atlas] (1623) and then Ferdinand Verbiest in his *Kunyu tushuo* [Illustrated Explanation of the Entire World] (1674). See Gong 231-33. As for the name Ireland, Gong, in his note, mentioned that both Matteo Ricci and Jules Aleni transliterated it into Chinese as *Xi bai ni ya*. Likewise, it is more likely that what both Jesuit missionaries had in mind was "Hibernia," the Latin name of Ireland, rather than the English word Ireland. See J. G. Bartholomew's map "Europe at the Time of the Crusades 1189," *A Literary and Historical Atlas of Europe* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1910) 20-1; Paul D. A. Harvey's *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (London: Hereford Cathedral and the British Library, 1996) 36, 52-3 and Scott D. Westrem's *The Hereford Map: A Transcription and Translation of the Legends, with Commentary* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001) 299, 309, 323.

emperors and higher-rank Chinese officials, Chinese intellectuals of late Ming and early Qing China barely knew anything about Britain. Sometimes their limited information about this developing European country looked quite inconsistent. For instance, in Xia Lin's *Minhai jiyao* [A Brief History of Fujian Sea, 1663], the word "English" was mistakenly considered as the name of the country and then transliterated into Chinese as "Yingguili."<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in Fu Heng's *Huangqing zhigong tu* [Sketches of Tribute-bearers to Imperial Qing, 1751],<sup>16</sup> the word "English" was transliterated into "Yingjili" and the country was considered as a vassal land of Holland.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, even though the name "Yingguili" was mentioned repeatedly in several important Chinese writings, like one of Chen Ang's memorials to Emperor Kangxi dated in 1717 and then in a geography book entitled *Haiguo wenjian lu* [Records of Information about Overseas Countries], written by Chen Lunjiong in 1730,<sup>18</sup> Fu's statement about the sovereignty of Britain in *Huangqing zhigong tu* clearly reflects the fact that the Chinese ruling class had paid little attention to Britain as an European country before Lord Macartney's visit.<sup>19</sup>

#### A. Red-haired foreigners: early images of the British visitors

As Earl H. Pritchard indicates in his *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, "The first English ship at Canton was sent from India under a 'Truce and Free Trade' with Portugal in 1635." This ship is

<sup>15</sup> The early Chinese transliteration of the word "English" had several variants. However, they were pronounced either *Yingguili* or *Yingjili*, with slight differences in accent and tone. See Gong 241-42.

<sup>16</sup> For more information about the background, editions and publication of this book, see Xing Qingfu, "Huang Qing zhigong tu de bianhui yu kanke" [The Editorship and Publication of *August Qing's Illustrated Account of Tribute-bearing Domains*], *Minzu Yanjiu* [Ethno-National Studies] 5 (2003): 69-74.

<sup>17</sup> Fu Heng, *Huang Qing zhigong tu* [August Qing's Illustrated Account of Tribute-bearing Domains] (Beijing, 1751) 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> See Gong 238-39.

<sup>19</sup> Gong indicated that in the 1784 edition of *Da Qing yitongzhi* [A Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire] the compilers did not even mention the name of England in the gazetteer, while in Wang Wentai's *Hongmao fan Yingjili kaolue* [A Study of the Red-haired Foreigners Called English](1841), the author still considers Britain a vassal state of Holland. See Gong 240-42.

called London and it is sent from India to Macao by the British East India Company. However, due to the Portuguese' hostility towards the English, the merchants of this ship did not have successful dealings with Chinese merchants during her short stay in China.<sup>20</sup> Unlike many other ships owned by the Portuguese, the Spanish or the Dutch, this ship did not have any conflict with Chinese merchants or the local Chinese force of Macao during her short visit. Therefore, there is no record of this British ship in any Chinese writings and no evidence shows that the local Chinese people had any idea at all that they were doing business with British businessmen, instead of the frequently-seen Portuguese or Dutch.<sup>21</sup>

The second British fleet, led by Captain John Weddell (c.1583-1639), arrived in China in 1637.<sup>22</sup> Not as peaceful as her forerunner had experienced two years earlier, this fleet had several fierce skirmishes with Chinese forces on her way to Guangzhou because the Portuguese authorities in Macao would not allow the British ships to drop anchor in Macao. However, as the Chinese public could not tell the British from the other Europeans, the raging British visitors were also called *Hongmao* [red-hair]<sup>23</sup> by the local Cantonese for their similar appearance and physique to those of other European visitors.<sup>24</sup> The term *Hongmao* is an abbreviation of *Hongmao fan* or *Hongmao yi* [red-haired foreigner] and all three terms were used at random to refer to the Dutch originally.<sup>25</sup> For example, in the ninety-first section of Zhi [Chronicle] of *Mingshi* [History of the Ming Dynasty], the

<sup>20</sup> Earl H. Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Octagon, 1970) 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Gong 237.

<sup>22</sup> Pritchard 55-56.

<sup>23</sup> See Zhang Tingyu et al., "Holan zhuan" [Biography of Holland] in *Mingshi* (Taipei: Dingwen, 1982), 10 March 2006 <<http://www.sinica.edu.tw/~tdbproj/handy1/>> and Xia Xie's *Zhongxi jishi* [The Chronicles of the Relations between China and the West], ed. Gao Hongzhi (1865, Changsha: Yuelu, 1988) 12-14.

<sup>24</sup> For more detailed records about the dates when the early Europeans came to visit the coasts of China as well as the names why they were called so, see K. C. Fok, "Early Ming Images of the Portuguese," *Historiography of Europeans in Africa and Asia, 1450-1800*, ed. Anthony Disney (Hampshire: Variorum, 1995) 143-46 and Gong 235-42.

<sup>25</sup> See Gong 236.

Dutch soldiers who occupied Penghu, a group of islands to the west of Taiwan, were called *Hongmao*, but in the two-hundred and sixty-fourth section and two-hundred and seventieth section of “*Liezhuan*” [Biography] of the same book, the Dutch were called *Hongmao yi* and *Hongmao fan* respectively.<sup>26</sup> As these Dutch visitors caused trouble along the coasts of Taiwan and Maluku islands, one of Qing China’s vassal states, while doing business with local residents, they were regarded by Chinese officials as unwelcome visitors or even malicious intruders. On this historical premise, it seems reasonable to assume that when the first British visitors were mistakenly called *Hongmao* by the local Cantonese, they were thought to be as aggressive and unruly as the Dutch, though the name *Hongmao* told later generations nothing specific but the distinctive red hair of the early European visitors seen in the southeast coasts of China.

#### **B. *Yingguili*, *Yingjili* and *Hongmao*: further understanding of Britain as a European country**

After the British East India Company established several commercial bases in Asia in the late seventeenth century, more British businessmen came to visit the ports of southeastern China and traded with the local citizens. Nevertheless, most Chinese people of early Qing China still failed to realize that these people from the British Isles were not citizens of Holland.<sup>27</sup> Due to the traditional fashion of denominating foreigners by their distinctive characteristics in appearance, these later-arrived British businessmen were still called *Hongmao* by the local people of

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<sup>26</sup> The original excerpts are provided and translated as follow: “其中空闊可藏巨艘，初爲紅毛所據” [As the giant ships can hide themselves in the spacious waters between the islands, the islands are first occupied by the red-haired people], “紅毛夷者，海外雜種，紺眼，赤鬚髮，所謂和蘭國也” [Red-haired foreigners are one of the overseas hybrids. The colour of their eyes is dark purple and their hairs red and curly. They are from a country called Holland], “西洋紅毛番長韋麻郎駕三大艘至澎湖” [Wijbland Van Waerwijck, a red-haired leader of foreigners from the western oceans, commands three huge ships to visit Penghu]. See Zhang Tingyu et al., *Mingshi*, 10 March 2006 <<http://www.sinica.edu.tw/~tdbproj/handy1/>>.

<sup>27</sup> Gong 238-41.

Canton. In fact, after the British navy defeated its Dutch rival in 1653, it was found that the term *Hongmao* was more often than not referred to the British than the Dutch in several Chinese colloquial languages.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to consider how the Chinese image of the British changed as the Chinese obtained more information about the British culture and customs through commercial exchanges. Let us take Fu's *Huangqing zhigong tu* as an example. In this rich collection of realistic sketches of various foreigners and minor tribes living on the farther outskirts of China, there are two picturesque sketches of British people. One of them is entitled "Yingjiliguo yiren" [English country male] (fig. 1) and the other is "Yingjiliguo yifu" [English country female] (fig. 2).



Fig. 1. "Yingjiliguo yiren," *Huang Qing zhigong tu* (1751) vol. 1, 46.

<sup>28</sup> See Gong 241.





Fig. 2. “Yingjiliguó yīfū,” *Huang Qīng zhīgōng tú* (1751) vol. 1, 46.

A short annotation is provided to introduce some general customs of the British people.

English [England] is also a vassal state of Holland. The clothes of these English people are similar to those of the Dutch. This state is very rich. The men usually wear clothes made with beautiful velvet and like to drink alcohol. The women like to girdle their waists and make them look slender before they get married. Besides, they usually wear their hair long and let it fall on their shoulders. Their upper outer garments are short and their skirts multi-layered. When these English people go out, they put on overcoats and bring with them snuffboxes rimmed with gold threads.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The Original Chinese annotation is punctuated as follow: 英吉利亦荷蘭屬國，夷人服飾相似，國頗富。男子多著多羅絨，喜飲酒。婦人未嫁時束腰欲其纖細，披髮垂肩，短衣重裙。出行則加大衣，以金縷合儲鼻菸自隨。 See Fu, *Huangqing zhigong tu*, vol. 1, 47.

Except for the mistake of classifying “English” [Britain] as a vassal state of Holland, there is nothing negative in this description. Similar neutral but more detailed accounts can also be found in other books published by the imperial government of Qing China, such as *Qingchao tongdian* [A Cyclopedia of Qing Dynasty, 1785-86] and *Qingchao wenxian tongkao* [A General Investigation into the Documents of Qing Dynasty, 1747].<sup>30</sup> It is therefore questionable to say that Chinese always regarded the foreigners as uncivilized barbarians or uncultured savages simply because they are addressed as *Yiren*. Hence, the term *Yiren* does not contribute anything negative to the Chinese images of the British. Its lexical connotation is bias-free. It indicates nothing but the foreign origin of the people in question.

### **C. *Fan*, *Yi*, barbarian and savage: intentional misinterpretation of Chinese images of the British**

Though the writers of these imperial books depicted the customs and habits of the British people in a neutral tone, others suggested that the public of imperial China still tended to regard foreigners as barbarians. As one carefully examines the definitions of the words *Yi* and *Fan* in early Chinese or Chinese-English bilingual dictionaries, it is apparent that both Chinese characters carry no negative connotations when used to refer to human beings before the early nineteenth century. For instance, in the first complete Chinese language dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* [An Etymology of the Chinese Language], compiled by Xu Shen in 100 A.D., *Yi* simply referred to “the people from the east” and bore no negative connotations.<sup>31</sup> In *Kangxi zidian* [The Kangxi Dictionary, 1716], the character *Yi* was associated with several other Chinese characters to form a number of nouns, such as *Nü yi* [female

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<sup>30</sup> Gong 244.

<sup>31</sup> Wang Yun ed., *Shuowen jiezi judou* [An Etymology of the Chinese Language, with Punctuation] (Beijing, 1850) n. pag.

yi], the name of a goddess of wind and *Youpo yi*, a transliteration of a Sanskrit appellative which means a spirit-purified female.<sup>32</sup> As for the character *Fan*, it is a neutral name referring to the minor tribes on the western outskirts of Chinese territory or a collective name referring to all foreigners.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, these neutral definitions of *Yi* and *Fan* referring to human beings can be found in several early bilingual dictionaries edited by native speakers of English as well. For instance, in the first ever produced Chinese-English dictionary, *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, in Three Parts* (1815-23), the British sinologist Robert Morrison defined the character *Yi* as follow:

... Foreigners on [in] the east; foreigners generally . . . . Neu e 女夷 name of a god [goddess] of wind; or of flowers. . . . Tung e 東夷 was originally applied to Corea [Korea]; title by which that kingdom was founded. The four words, 蠻狄羌夷 Man, teih, keang, e, Express the foreigners on [in] the South, North, West, and East, of China. E jin 夷人 a foreigner. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Morrison explains that *Fan* was a “low word denoting *Foreign*” and then gives several examples to illustrate the connotation of it.

Fan wang juh kung teen chaou 番王入貢天朝 foreign kings pay tribute to China, the celestial Empire.

Fan kwei 番鬼 foreign devil; an opprobrious epithet applied by the people of Canton to Europeans.

Fang pang 番邦 foreign states.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For more usages of the character *Yi* please see Zhang Yushu et al., “*Yi* [夷]” *Kangxi zidian* [The Kangxi Dictionary], 15 Dec. 2006 <<http://www.zdic.net/zd/zi/ZdicE5ZdicA4ZdicB7.htm>>.

<sup>33</sup> See *Hanyu da zidian* [Dictionary of Chinese Language] (Wuhan: Hubei cishi, 1986-90) and *Hanyu da cidian* [Lexicon of Chinese Language] (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidan, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> See Robert Morrison, *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, in Three Parts* (Macao, 1815-23), Part I, vol. 1, 131-32.

<sup>35</sup> Morrison, *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, Part I, vol. 1, 151.

Hence, etymologically speaking, there was no ground for the Europeans to assume that they were being humiliated by the Chinese when they were addressed as *Hongmao yi* or *Hongmao fan* before these two terms were deliberately mistranslated into “red-haired barbarian” or “red-haired savage” on the eve of the first Opium War (1839-42).<sup>36</sup>

Another important dictionary which can be used to prove that there was no negative meaning connoted in the address *Hongmao fan* is Cartairs Douglas's (1830-77) *Chinese-English Dictionary of Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy* (1873).<sup>37</sup> As the term *Hongmao fan* was first used by the local people of Guangzhou and Fujian in their vernacular dialects to refer to the European foreigners in the seventeenth century, it is therefore helpful to check the meaning of this term in those dictionaries which record the historical connotations of these vernacular languages. Again, as we look into the meaning of *Fan* in this dictionary, we find a similar neutral definition to that found in previous dictionaries published before the Opium Wars. Here is Douglas's definition of *Fan*: “hoan (R. foreign), foreign. hô-hoan, to go and make peace with foreigners.”<sup>38</sup> Examining the definitions of ambiguous and controvertible words like *Yi* and *Fan* found in some of the early authoritative dictionaries published before the first Opium War, we discover that there is a discrepancy in the interpretations of those two words referring to foreigners. Originally, there is no negative connotation signified by these two words. The

<sup>36</sup> As Morrison deliberately translated “yi” into “barbarian” after Lord Napier's mission to China in 1834, few British intellectuals, such as Sir George Staunton and P. P. Thomas, spoke out to question the validity of Morrison's new translation. Liu argued that Morrison changed his translation later because he was acting, to use P. P. Thomas's words, “under authority.” It was therefore highly possible that, being a distinguished British sinologist and a member of Parliament, Morrison's academic authority and reputation did make many members of Parliament believe that they were sternly insulted for being called “English barbarians” by the Qing government. See Liu, “Legislating the Universal” 131-34.

<sup>37</sup> Reverend Cartairs Douglas was sent to China to preach Christianity by the English Presbyterian Mission in 1855. His dictionary was later supplemented and republished by Reverend Thomas Barclay in 1923.

<sup>38</sup> Cartairs Douglas, *Chinese-English Dictionary of Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy* (London: Truber, 1873).

negative implications of *Yi* and *Fan* are actually added by the pro-war British sinologists on the eve of the First Opium War in order to rationalize the pretext of fomenting a war against China. Those distorted interpretations of *Yi* and *Fan* eventually attribute the characteristic of xenophobia to the Chinese.

#### D. Summary

From the previous discussion we may conclude that early Chinese images of British people were not so negative as had been claimed. The Chinese images of the British people reflected in both Chinese and English writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show that people of imperial China regarded their early British visitors as an ordinary Western tribe like the Belgians, the French, the Italians, the Portuguese and the Spanish. This can be proved by indicating a fact that a large body of priests from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and other European countries, many of them were supposedly red-haired foreigners, were recruited as teachers to the emperors of China and courteously entitled “Xiru” [西儒, western Confucian scholar] or “Xishi” [西士, western scholar].<sup>39</sup> Many of them were treated with great respect by their Chinese associates as their knowledge of science and philosophy was recognized and appreciated by Chinese intellectuals.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it seems more reasonable for one to say that these early negative images of the British people were present in the minds of the British visitors or politicians themselves, rather than in the minds of the Chinese people of late Ming and early Qing dynasties. To be more specific, the negative connotation of *Yi* was scarcely evolved until the early nineteenth century. Tan noted that “when two abortive

<sup>39</sup> Tan also points out that three Indian monks, Buddhacinga (235-348), Kumarajiva (344-413) and Amoghavajra (705-714) were revered by Chinese emperors as *Guoshi* [National Teacher] in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. See Tan 108.

<sup>40</sup> For more specific examples of how European priests were well received by Chinese intellectuals and emperors, please see Guo Fu-xiang and Zuo Yuan-po's *Zhongguo huangdi yu yangren* (Beijing: Shishi, 2002).

British attempts on Macau (in 1802 and 1808) generated tension between Britain and China, the Chinese began to talk about *Yi* with disrespect and scorn, as they had done about *Hu* one and half-millennia ago.”<sup>41</sup> Gong also suggested that since the British troops intruded into Macao in September 1808, the Chinese government came to see the aggressive nature of the British colonialist. Besides, increasing commercial disputes resulted from opium-smuggling and debts also make the Chinese ruling class become more and more alert to the British. As a result, since 1808, when the Chinese emperors and officials mention the British, they often apply negative adjectives like arrogant [桀驁], avaricious and deceitful [貪詐], brutal [強橫], crafty [狡黠], disrespectful [不恭], cunning and unpredictable [狡險叵測] to describe the British.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the failure to note this historical background can lead to a conclusion that is misleading.

### III. Britain as a better land

The previous section suggested that the Chinese images of the British are mostly neutral, if not completely positive, up to the end of the eighteenth century. This was partly because no serious commercial or military conflicts happened between China and Britain during the first 150 years of their contacts and partly because, even if there were occasional run-ins, Chinese officials mistakenly thought that the trouble makers were the Dutch, rather than the British. However, when commercial and military conflicts between the two countries increased from the early nineteenth century,<sup>43</sup> the Chinese government started to realize the nature and see patterns of British colonization and consider them as a potential threat to the

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<sup>41</sup> See Tang 76.

<sup>42</sup> See Gong 248-49.

<sup>43</sup> In 1802 and 1808 English warships arrived in Macao and tried to seize it from the Portuguese, but both attempts ended with no success. These two military actions alerted the Qing government and prompted it to take the military threat of England seriously. See Gong 247-50.

economics and territory of the Qing Empire. As I have just mentioned at the end of last section, more and more negative adjectives were used by the Chinese emperor and his officials to describe the British after 1808, when British troops invaded Macao and British warships entered the harbour of Canton without permission.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, except for some odd adjectives being used to praise the military power of Britain, barely any single positive adjective was used by the Chinese emperor or his officials to describe the British after this incident. If we compare the negative images to those being presented in one of Emperor Kangxi's statements, we can see how the Chinese elites' attitudes towards foreigners changed over the years. In this favourable statement, which specifically refers to the missionaries serving in the imperial court, Kangxi says:

Europeans have always served me with zeal and affection. There are many Chinese who distrust [them], but, as for myself, I am so fully convinced of [their] uprightness and good faith that I publicly declare that [they] are deserving of every trust and confidence.<sup>45</sup>

A comparison between the positive images of foreigners depicted in this statement and the former negative images of the British may somehow reflect Chinese emperors' practical attitudes towards foreigners. If a foreigner was willing to abide by the law of China and contribute his knowledge to benefit the empire in whatever form, he was usually considered as a welcome visitor and his intelligence appreciated; nevertheless, if the presence of a foreigner will bring any harm or threat to the sovereignty or security of the empire, he is often labeled as an unwelcome intruder and his nature questioned.

Therefore, there are a number of interesting things can be perceived from

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<sup>44</sup> Gong 248-49.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Earl. H. Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1929, New York : Octagon Books, 1970) 100.

those negative presentations of the British. First, as the Chinese ruling elites used negative words to depict the British, most of them did not have personal experiences of associating with the British in China. What they knew about the British was mostly derived from the reports sent from the local officials, who had to deal with the increasing commercial disputes between merchants of China and Britain on a daily basis.<sup>46</sup> Hence, like the British images of the Chinese as we have discussed earlier, the images of the British constructed by the Chinese ruling class are often products of a mixture of hearsay and imagination, rather than products of their genuine personal experiences. Second, when the Chinese ruling class used those negative adjectives to describe the British, they had no intention to distinguish the British merchants in China from the British citizens in Britain. They simply presumed that all the British citizens were as ill-natured as those who visited southeast coasts of China and caused trouble there. This strategy which simplifies the variations of the objects not only helps to reduce the number of the images of “the Other,” but also makes the chosen images become more recognizable and representative. Third, as the vocabularies of depicting the characteristics of the British are repeated by the Chinese ruling class regularly, they therefore become a group of cliché or collective terminologies for this specific class of people. Interestingly, these clichés were not adopted by all the Chinese intellectuals at that time. It implies that different Chinese writers may view the British from different perspectives and their images of the British may vary accordingly. Fourth, the vocabularies used by the Chinese ruling class to refer to the British also mirror certain self-images of the Chinese themselves. It is because as they talk about the

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<sup>46</sup> When the Qing government decided to make the Hong merchants of Canton as monopolists to deal with the foreign merchants and stopped its officials to have direct communications with the foreign merchants in the 1750s, the commercial disputes seem to have been never ending. Consequently, the local officials of Canton barely have anything good to say about the foreigners in their reports for the central authorities. For more information about the restrictions forced upon the foreign merchants in Canton and elsewhere from 1720 to 1760, see Pritchard 109-17.



British, they often highlight the differences or similarities between their objects and themselves and consequently depict themselves between the lines. For instance, as they suggested the British to be arrogant, avaricious, brutal, crafty, cunning, deceitful and immodest, they were, in an indirect way, suggesting that they themselves were a contented, honest, humble, peaceful and sincere people.

From the previous discussion we can see that as the British started to show their economical and military ambitions in China in the early nineteenth century, the Chinese changed their images of the British accordingly. As John T. Pratt points out:

An uneasy feeling that China was growing weaker and Western nations more powerful, the indication given by the two attempts to occupy Macao of what Western aggression might mean, the increasing lawlessness and violence that accompanied the rapidly growing illicit trade in opium all combined to cause deterioration in the Chinese official attitude towards foreigners.<sup>47</sup>

So, the Chinese, especially the ruling class, started to substitute their images of the British from neutral or positive ones to negative ones after the British government decided to display their powerful military force in China more openly.

However, as I have suggested earlier, the negative images of the British held by the Chinese ruling elites do not match the ones held by the contemporary Chinese public. For instance, in both Xie Qinggao's "Hailu" [Maritime Records, 1820] and Ye Zhongjin's "Yingjiliguoyiqing jilue" [A Note on the State of England, 1834], Britain was generally depicted as a well-governed country and her citizens as civilized and courteous as the Chinese. This distinctive difference suggests that there was no identical image of the British in Chinese writings of this time. It is

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<sup>47</sup> John T. Pratt, *War and Politics in China* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943) 49.

because the British being observed by the Chinese local officers in Canton and Macao were different from the ones being observed by Xie in Britain and the ones more comprehensively studied by Ye. Hence, objectively speaking, there were two types of images of the British in Chinese writings before the first Opium War broke out. One type of images was negative, which was favoured by the conservative ruling elites, while another type was the neutral or positive ones depicted by the liberal-minded intellectuals of Canton and Macao. However, after the British military threat become more prominent in China in late 1830s, more and more emotional and unfavourable images were created by the Chinese intellectuals of different classes to picture the British intruders.

In order to have a more complete understanding of the various Chinese images of the British before the first Opium War, I would like to analyze Xie and Ye's works in the following sections and then illustrate the diversity of the images of the British in Chinese writings prior to the first Opium War.

#### **A. Xie Qinggao's *Hailu***

In 1820, a blind businessman called Xie Qinggao (1765-1821), who was from Canton but resided in Macao at that time, dictated his former adventures around the world as a sailor to Yang Bingnan, a scholar also from Canton. The fruit of their collaboration is a travel account entitled *Hailu*, published in the same year. On analyzing the images depicted in travel accounts, Daniel-Henri Pageaux says

In a travel account, the author-traveler is the producer, the main object, the organizer, and the director of the narration. He is simultaneously a narrator, an actor, an experiencing subject, and an experienced object. He writes a memoir for his own actions; he is a protagonist on an exotic stage; he is the best writer, columnist, and land surveyor of the exotic experience. He believes himself to be the only witness because he is

the traveler himself. However, traveling is not only a displacement in a geographical or historical space, but also a displacement in the culture of the observer. Only when people use the tools (vocabularies) stored in their cultural luggage will they be able to “see” a foreign land.<sup>48</sup>

Here Pageaux suggests that when one visits a foreign land, one is actually traveling to a different space of culture as well. As one produces his personal image of the foreign land, one, unavoidably, has to use a set of familiar vocabularies to depict the unfamiliar foreign land or people. It is in these vocabularies that readers will be able to see the narrator-viewer’s feelings towards the foreign land or people. In addition to highlighting the cultural displacement of travel accounts, Pageaux also suggests that different ways of traveling, such as by horse or by train, may make a traveler produce different images of the same foreign land, while the purposes of the traveling routes, such as culture, diplomacy or economic, will also make a traveler like or dislike a foreign land.<sup>49</sup> Based upon these observations and suggestions on the study of foreign images in travel accounts, let us turn back to explore the significance of Xie’s images of Britain and its citizens.

According to Xie, he used to do business with some elder businessmen in Hainan, the second largest island of Qing China which is located off the southern coast of the country, at an early age. When he was eighteen years old, his ship was destroyed in a storm and he was rescued by some Portuguese nearby, who then brought him to visit many countries around the world thereafter. During his fourteen years of adventure (1782-95), he visited many countries along the sea routes from Asia to Europe and he kept notes of the architectures, clothes, customs, ethnic groups, fortresses, geographical characteristics, languages, religions, and products of

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<sup>48</sup> Daniel-Henri Pageaux, “Cong wenhua xingxiang dao jiti xingxiang we” [De l’imagerie culturelle l’imaginaire], trans. Meng Hua, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 146-47. The translation is mine and it is based upon Meng’s Chinese translation. See appendix 2 for the original French text.

<sup>49</sup> Pageaux, “Cong wenhua xingxiang dao jiti xingxiang we” 147.

each individual country he has visited or heard of. He also learned several foreign languages during those years of wondering around the world. In his later years, he lost his eyesight and settled down in Macao, where he used his knowledge of foreign languages to make a living as an interpreter. He died the year after he told Yang his story of traveling around the world. Though he was the first Chinese that ever visited Europe and Africa in person and told his countrymen what the outside world looked like, his story did not appeal to contemporary intellectuals, as they seemed to be more interested in textual exegesis.<sup>50</sup> However, when the British military threat went up in the late 1830s, this work caught a widespread attention from the intellectuals who were interested in the world on the other side of their national boundary. The popularity and importance of the book can be illustrated by the facts that it was later included in Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi* (1842), the most comprehensive Chinese world encyclopedia to date, and being recommended to Emperor Daoguang by Lin Zexu,<sup>51</sup> who was later appointed an imperial commissioner to ban opium trading and burned around 20,000 cartons of opium possessed by the foreign and local businessmen in 1839.

As Xie had visited Britain in person and probably stayed there for some time, his description of the country and the citizens is comparatively comprehensive and detailed. He describes the country as follow:

[The people of] England is the "red-haired foreigners". . . The population is small, but there are many rich people in the country. Their houses are all multi-storied. They are eager for quick success and instant benefits and many of them are engaged in overseas trade. Wherever there is a place of profit, they all compete for it. Their merchants are all over the world. Their overseas ports include

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<sup>50</sup> See Gong 252.

<sup>51</sup> See Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi* [A Collation of *Maritime Records*], ed. An Jing (Beijing: Shangwu, 2002) 7-8.

Bangladesh, Madras and Bombay. The citizens are obliged to offer their labour to the king at the age of fifteen and relieved from the obligation at the age of sixty. They recruit soldiers from other countries; therefore, though their country is small, they have a strong military force with more than one hundred thousand soldiers. Most countries are afraid of her for this.<sup>52</sup>

In the eyes of Xie, Britain was a prosperous country where there were many rich people and magnificent buildings. He also noticed that the powerful military force gave the British merchants a strong support to seek their fortune all over the world. Xie pointed out that the land of Britain was comparatively small, but she has a large body of foreign mercenaries to fight for her. As a result, her powerful military strength often frightened other countries. Xie's reference to Britain's foreign soldiers suggested that the Chinese should not ignore the British simply because the latter's land was not as large as China. Instead, Xie reminded his readers that the British had already established many commercial and military bases around the world and she might become a threat to China someday. This description of Britain somehow reflects Xie's instinct as a businessman. He not only observed the wealth of the country, but also noticed that the wealth was secured by a strong military force. As a traveler, he noticed that the British had already established a number of overseas bases in Asia and used them to develop and protect their overseas commerce.

In addition to the mighty strength of the British military force, Xie also described the basic organization of the British troops and panegyrized the soldiers for observing orders strictly and fighting bravely.<sup>53</sup> In fact, except for underestimating the skills of the British troops, whom were claimed to have no other skills other than firing guns, Xie's evaluation of the British troops is quite accurate

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<sup>52</sup> Xie and Yang 250.

<sup>53</sup> Xie and Yang 251.

and positive. Comparing his evaluation to those made by the Chinese writers who had suffered from the strength of the British troops in the first Opium War, one is sure to see the distinctive difference between them. When Xie visited Britain, the British government had not used her powerful military force against the Chinese yet. So, he gave an objective description of the powerful strength of the British army without anticipating the calamity that the Chinese were going to suffer decades later. Nevertheless, when other Chinese writers wrote about the British troops after the first Opium War broke out, they tended to emphasize more on the brutality and cruelty of the British soldiers than the excellence of their weapons and superior organization of their troops. This difference in perspectives illustrates that writers are usually conditioned or influenced by their milieus. When the relationship between two countries is friendly or peaceful, writers of both countries tend to depict people of the other country neutrally or positively; however, when the relationship between two countries is antagonistic or hostile, writers tend to use negative or unfavourable descriptions to picture people of the other country in their works.

Xie depicted London as a city with endless buildings and verdant trees, where its citizens were generally rich. He also described the water supply system of the city and how the king collected water tax from each family. Xie observed that British laws were generally strict and there were fewer thieves, which he considered a wonder. He also noticed that many children were the offspring of prostitutes and they were raised without being discriminated against or harmed.<sup>54</sup> Considering what he saw in Britain as a wonder, Xie therefore showed his admiration for the British and suggested that Britain seemed to be a better land for people to live in. Xie's praise of the public security and social welfare of Britain must have given his readers a very positive picture of the foreign land as cases of thievery and robbery

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<sup>54</sup> Xie and Yang 250.

were common in their daily lives, so were instances of abandoning new born babies, no matter whether they were legitimate or not.

Other customs that attracted Xie's attention included that British men and women usually wore white clothes for everyday life, but wore black ones for mourning, British women liked to wear girdles in order to have shapely figures, and British ladies, especially those from the rich families, all started to learn dancing at an early age. Whenever there was a party, they dressed up and danced to music.<sup>55</sup> These fashions were in complete contrast to those of the Chinese since the Chinese normally wore white clothes for mourning and barely let their ladies show their faces on public occasions. However, Xie did not use his own culture as a standard to condemn the British. Instead, he simply noted the exotic customs without giving it any moral judgment. Comparing his description about the dancing fashion to that in the *Yingyao riji* [A Diary about England, 1878] by Liu Xihong, who visited Britain as a deputy ambassador of Qing government in 1876 and accused the British ladies for exposing their breasts while dancing,<sup>56</sup> we may see what an open-minded observer Xie was.

As a sailor, Xie was particularly interested in the British policy of helping and rescuing unfortunate people on the sea whose lives were at the mercy of Nature. He said that "whenever their sailors go out and see a shipwreck, members of the crew have to lay three planks into the water to save the lives of the survivors. If they successfully save anyone from the shipwreck, they have to feed him and give

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<sup>55</sup> Xie and Yang 250-51.

<sup>56</sup> Liu was appointed a deputy ambassador to the first Chinese Ambassador to England Guo Songtao (1818-1891) by Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908). He kept a diary during his stay in England, in which he often used the classic Chinese learning as a standard to criticize the customs and fashions of the English. In one of his accounts about the dancing fashion of the English, which he must have observed many times, he even whimsically suggested that the upper parts of the female dancers' bodies and the lower parts of the male dancers' bodies were naked. See Liu Xihong, "Yingyao riji," *Guo Songtao deng shixiji liu zhong* [Six Diaries of Guo Songtao and Others], ed. Wang Licheng (Beijing: Sanlian, 1998) 256.

him some money to travel back to his own country. Whoever breaks the law will be punished. This is indeed a beneficent policy.”<sup>57</sup> Having experienced a shipwreck and been rescued by the Portuguese years earlier, Xie commended the British for practicing the policy of saving the lives of unfortunate people on the sea. The British government, in his eyes, was a merciful one.

Except for the customs and traditions mentioned above, Xie also suggested that many other customs and traditions of the British were similar to those of the Portuguese.<sup>58</sup> Of his descriptions of the fourteen European countries in his book,<sup>59</sup> Xie spent more space to introduce Portugal than he had done for any other country. This is probably because Portugal was one of the countries where he stayed the longest after being rescued by the Portuguese. In his lengthy description about the Portuguese, he also mentioned the following exotic customs: first, the young ladies liked to expose parts of their breasts in public, while the old ones tended to conceal them. Second, monogamy was strictly observed in this country and marriages were normally decided by the young couples’ own affections and wills, rather than the decisions of their parents. Third, the priests were obliged to keep the secrets of those who confessed to them and would be punished with the death penalty if they divulged the secrets to anyone else. Fourth, normally the ladies were present whenever their relatives came to visit their families. Fifth, as the ladies went out, they often walked hand in hand with their husbands, parents or relatives. In addition, Xie also minutely described how the dead were buried in churches and the etiquette of greeting people of different ranks. He noted what he saw and what he

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<sup>57</sup> Xie and Yang 251.

<sup>58</sup> Xie suggested that most customs of the English were similar to those of the Portuguese. See Xie and Yang 251.

<sup>59</sup> Xie mentioned 15 different countries in his description of Europe; however, it seems that he has made a mistake on the territory of Prussia and separated it into two different countries. The countries he mentioned include Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium (An Jing suggests it might refer to Swiss), Switzerland, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Denmark, Austria, Prussia, England, and Sweden. See Xie and Yang 200-63.



heard in Portugal without evaluating them by any standard. Hence, suggesting that the British customs were similar to those of the Portuguese and finding no fault with them at all, Xie's overall image of the British was likely a pleasing one. His account about the customs and traditions of the Europeans as whole suggests that he regarded the Europeans as no less civilized than the Chinese. From his admiring descriptions of the British and the Europeans it is likely that he regarded the Europeans as a respectable model for the Chinese to emulate.

Xie's favourable image of Britain and the British is not only perceived in the section that he dedicates to Britain, but also in other parts where he refers to the British colonies all over the world. In his descriptions of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Penang and Singapore, all places seem to be well developed and governed by the British businessmen and colonial officials.<sup>60</sup> From his perspective as a businessman, all colonies greatly benefited from the administration and developments of the British. For instance, Singapore was turned into a famous port within years, while Penang was also transformed from a poorly-populated small island into a rich city where people's clothes, foods and houses were luxurious and horse-driven carriages were commonly used by the inhabitants. Xie's image of the British therefore mirrors his instinctive concern about the material life of the inhabitants of British colonies. There was no moral or political judgment on the legitimacy of the British administration in those colonies in his descriptions of the lands mentioned above. He simply focused on the material life of the people in the colonies. This emphasis on the material life of the inhabitants truthfully reflected his nature as a businessman.

Xie's overall image of Britain and her citizens was generally positive. The country was powerful, rich, and had few thieves. The people were brave,

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<sup>60</sup> See Xie and Yang 39, 51.

kind-hearted, law-abiding, and talented. The British women were definitely far less restricted than the ones in China. In fact, it seems that the Chinese traveler had a high regard for the British for their good nature and their talents. To him, Britain seemed to be a better governed land on the other side of the world.

Considering the historical background of Xie's account, we can see that Xie's story, to a certain degree, reflects a different Chinese image of the British before Britain and China become hostile to each other. As Xie's life was saved by the Portuguese years ago and he did not have the experience of seeing his country being devastated by the British soldiers and warships, his image of the British on the whole is favourable. His account somehow proves that the Chinese do not always consider the foreigners as barbarous and their cultures inferior. Instead, the humanity of the foreigners might be better than the Chinese and their cultural achievements far greater.

### **B. Ye Zhongjin's "Yingjiliguo yiqing jilue"**

As the commercial conflicts between Britain and China became more and more frequent and violent, a small number of Chinese scholars started to collect information about the British and write about them in the hope of introducing this new "species" of Westerners to the Chinese public with more concrete and comprehensive information. The sources of their information about the British included the world maps made by the Jesuits who served at the imperial court, historical documents left by former scholars, official reports finished by local officers who had experience of dealing with foreigners, magazines and newspapers which were circulated among the foreigners in China, local folk hearsay and travel accounts of the people who had been to Britain or the British colonies around the world. One of the earliest works of this kind is an article written by a scholar called

Ye Zhongjin. In his “Yingjiliguoyiqing jilue” [A Note on the State of England, 1834], Ye introduced the architectures, autopsies, colonies, costumes, currency, educational systems, entertainments, dining habits, institutions of public services, land policies, languages, laws, location of the country, matrimony, intermarriages between the British royal family with people of other European royal families, organizations of companies, penalties, patent laws, recruitment of mercenaries, religion, taxation, wars and weapons of Britain and the British. If we compare his account to former narratives about the British, we may say that his article has actually provided Chinese readers the most complete picture of the British at that time.

Like Xie Qinggao, Ye did not show any contempt or disagreement as he comments on the customs and traditions of the British. Instead, he simply noted the cultural differences between the British and the Chinese in an unbiased view. For instance, he mentions that the British do not perform kowtows, but simply take off their hats, to show their respect. Besides, he also mentions that the British seem to value women over men, the British men do not adopt concubines, they do not sell their children for any reason, they do not offer sacrifice to the deceased, their grown-up children are not obliged to take care of their elderly parents and they do not punish their slaves or use abusive language to them because there is simply no slave kept in their houses. Even though the British seem to have a very different ideology and sense of values, Ye does not apply the traditional Confucian ideology to discredit them. He acknowledges the cultural differences between the British and the Chinese and respects them.

In terms of the British public services, Ye noted that many poorhouses, nurseries, hospitals were financed by the churches all over the country and they were supervised by the righteous people recommended by the local communities.

Thanks to these institutions, there was no one selling children in Britain. Besides, the cost of taking care of the blind and the disabled was paid by the king's income from taxation. Ye also noted that anyone who could produce an item of ingenious talent would be granted a patent for thirty years. He used their practice of postmortem examination as an example to illustrate how the British could keep improving their knowledge of medical science.<sup>61</sup>

When Ye was writing his article about the British, the British merchants had already been making business with the Chinese for a number of decades and commercial conflicts between businessmen of two countries were also regularly heard. Therefore, Ye spent a lot of space to illustrate the history of British commerce in China, the commercial and military conflicts between the British and other Europeans in China and elsewhere, the artillery of the British troops, as well as the way they recruited mercenaries around the world. He suggested that the British mercenaries were brave, devoted, and loyal and all of them, whether they were from Malacca or other countries, were very well paid. By highlighting the strength of the British force, Ye wished to remind his countrymen how the British government had successfully used its strong force to establish overseas bases over the years and how it might threaten the national security of China henceforth. Nevertheless, his advice was never taken seriously until the first Opium War broke out.

Ye held a less favourable impression of the British businessmen. He suggested that they were generally intrepid and eager to defeat others.<sup>62</sup> This judgment is based upon the author's analysis of contemporary circumstances in southeastern China, where the British businessmen were gradually replacing the

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<sup>61</sup> Ye Zhongjin "Yingjiliguoyiqing jilue" [A Note on the State of England], *Xiaofanghuzhai yudi congchao* [The Little Square Teapot Study's Collection about the Land], ed. Wang Xiqi (1897, Taipei: Guangwen, 1962) N. pag.

<sup>62</sup> Ye Zhongjin, N. pag.

Portuguese and the Spanish to become the largest party to dominate the exports and imports of the Asian and European markets. Possibly recognizing the fact that being competitive was one of the prerequisites to survive in the business world, Ye did not condemn the British for being aggressive, but simply warned his fellow countrymen to be prepared for any possible military conflict that might result from the increasing commercial disputes between Britain and China.

Hence, as a whole, Ye did not consider the British inferior to the Chinese in any aspect at all. He applauded the British government for offering good public service to the less fortunate citizens and encouraging innovations. He also praised the British for treating their women more fairly and less restrictedly. In his eyes, Britain was a powerful and rich country where education was available to most of her people and where the laws and orders were effectively observed. It is very likely that he considered Britain a better governed country than his own country.

To sum up, Ye's account provided Chinese readers with another different picture of the British. Even though his own country was facing the British military threat from time to time, he did not let his patriotism and traditional Confucian ideology blind his judgment. He recognized the superiority of the British in medical and military sciences and welfare services without reservation. His panegyric of them clearly mirrors his favourable image of them and suggests that the Chinese are in many ways inferior. For him, the British might be different from the Chinese in a number of aspects, but they were nonetheless as civilized and humane as the Chinese.

### **C. Summary**

From the previous discussion we can see that a number of local intellectuals of Canton and Macao still held a quite positive image of the British before the outbreak

of the first Opium War, even though the relationship between two countries was gradually impaired by the increasing commercial disputes caused by the opium smuggling as well as the British military threat. The emergence of these two works also suggests that there were certain “noises” or “impurities” in the so-called collective Chinese image of the British of this period. Obviously, the Chinese ruling elites’ images of the British were not in accordance with those of the local folks of Canton or Macao. The diversity of their images reflects the fact that while the Chinese ruling elites tended to consider the British as a potential threat to the economy and territory of China, the local folks seemed to see them as a people whose achievements in politics and material life could offer the Chinese a dream to strive for.

The positive images of the British depicted in Xie and Ye’s works also suggest that there is no such thing as natural xenophobia in the blood of the Chinese. The xenophobic attitude of the Chinese was actually evoked by the missionaries’ opposition to the Chinese tradition of ancestor worshipping and Confucianism in the early eighteenth century and the military threat of the Europeans, particularly the British, the Dutch and the Portuguese, since the early seventeenth century. In fact, the Chinese scholar-administrators’ antipathy and distrust of the British in the early eighteenth century is very similar to the ones aroused by the missionaries in the early eighteenth century. Both can be deemed as a natural response to the threatening “Other.” The missionaries were generally considered as a threat to the deep-rooted Confucian ideology and the traditional culture of the Chinese, while the British were seen as a threat to the economics and security of the Qing Empire. Hence, the Chinese ruling elites’ resentment of the British in the early nineteenth century was basically a rational psychological response of their anxiety and fear in the face of the powerful British military strength, rather than an evidence of their natural

xenophobia.

Moreover, both the Chinese ruling elites' negative images and the local citizens' positive images of the British have reflected their limited understanding or wishful thinking of the British. Nevertheless, both negative and positive images of the British should be considered as requisite components of the collective social imaginary of the object in question. The coexistence of the negative and the positive images of the British during this period suggest that the Chinese do not have a consistent image of the British before the first Opium War. As we shall see in the next chapter, as the economic and political relationships between Britain and China changing from bad to worse in the late 1830s, the number of negative images of the British seemed to gradually exceed the number of the positive images, though the latter ones were never completely disappeared in Chinese writings.

## Chapter Five

### Chinese Images of the British during the First Opium War, 1839-1842

#### **I. Chinese writers' varied attitudes towards the British**

This chapter will discuss a number of works by some well-known Chinese writers whose official careers offered them valuable chances to associate themselves with the British personally or to observe the British at close hand during the first Opium War. As their attitudes towards the British varied, they tended to present different images of the British in their literary works or official reports. Generally speaking, if a Chinese writer was more willing to open his mind to consider the British as different but equal human beings and appreciate their exotic culture, his image of the British tended to be more neutral or even positive. However, if a writer adopted a contemptuous attitude towards the British, it would be more likely for readers to find negative images of the British in his works.

In most cases, self-images and alter-images of the British are constructed in a dichotomy by Chinese writers and they usually emphasize more on the differences than the similarities between the British and the Chinese. A commonly used strategy adopted by the Chinese writers who are hostile to the British is to dehumanize or demonize the British by associating them with frightful animals or fearful ghosts. By suggesting that the British are as brutal as tigers and wolves or as terrifying as the ghosts, they produce a positive self-image for themselves. Nevertheless, during the first Opium War, not all Chinese images of the British were negative. A small number of Chinese writers still adopted an unprejudiced or even admiring perspective to depict the Chinese and consequently their images of the British tend to be more neutral or favourable. As a whole, the number of favourable images of the British is far smaller than the one of the negative ones,



which therefore gives many modern readers the impression that the Chinese never looked at the British positively or regarded them as equals before the westernization movement (or the Self-strengthening Movement, 1861-1895)<sup>1</sup> was finally launched in the late Qing Dynasty. Hence, reviewing Chinese works about the British during the first Opium War as a whole, the Chinese images of the British are rather divergent than unified. Some writers attributed negative images to the British because they had heard about or personally experienced the ruthlessness of the British soldiers, while some other writers understood the advantages of Western sciences and depicted the British as equal or superior to the Chinese in various aspects.

## II. Liberal writers' images of the British and the Chinese

### A. Lin Zexu's "Huashi yiyan"

Lin Zexu (1785-1851) was the first Chinese official in modern Chinese history who recruited professional translators to translate foreign works into Chinese.<sup>2</sup> His translation projects were launched soon after he was appointed an imperial commissioner by Emperor Daoguang (1782-1852) to go to Canton [or Guangdong] to ban opium smuggling in 1839. When he arrived in Canton he found that not only did the high-ranking officials in the central government have very little knowledge of foreigners and their countries, but so also did the local officials in the coastal cities who had to deal with foreigners on a daily basis. In order to give the

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<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the Zongli Yamen (known as Office for General Management or the Government Office of Foreign Relations) in 1861 is generally marked as the beginning of the westernization movement, while the end of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895 is generally considered the termination of the movement as China's first westernized fleet, the Beiyang fleet, was severely defeated by the Japanese in September 1894.

<sup>2</sup> In East-Han Dynasty (25-220 AD) and Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), the Chinese government recruited many people from India, Kanju, Parthia, Yuezhi, and some middle-Asia countries to translate Buddhist texts into Chinese. These efforts of translation were mostly commissioned by the emperors, rather than by the individuals. See Shen Fuwei, *Zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu shi* [The History of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange], (Taipei: Donghua, 1989) 79-80.

Chinese intellectuals more correct and updated information about the Europeans, he hired a number of knowledgeable people to translate foreign works into Chinese.<sup>3</sup> The works that Lin asked his translators to render into Chinese were mostly about economics, geography, history, military affairs and laws of foreign lands, rather than literary works. As a patron of his translation projects, Lin not only selected materials for his translators to work on, but also contributed his in-depth knowledge of the Chinese language and politics to the translations from time to time. For instance, as he proofread the draft of *Sizhouzhi* [A Gazetteer of Four Continents, 1842],<sup>4</sup> he corrected many mistakes and polished the Chinese translation wherever appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

In 1840 Lin published a short article called “Huashi yiyān” [Foreigners on China],<sup>6</sup> in which he made an extensive comparison of different customs practiced by the British and the Chinese and gave a detailed account of the opium smuggling carried out in the southeastern coasts of China. Though the title of the article suggests that the subjects of the article will be China and her citizens, it was also a comparative study of the British and the Chinese cultures.

It is indicated by scholars that the main sources of this article are two English works: John Francis Davis’s *The Chinese* (1836) and Algernon Sydney Thelwall’s *The Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China: Being a Development of the Main Causes which Exclude the Merchants of Great Britain from the Advantages of an*

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about Lin’s translators and the works they have translated into Chinese, see Shao Xueping and Lin Benchun, “Lin Zexu han ta de fanyi banzi” [Lin Zexu and his Cadre Translators], *Shanghai Journal of Translators for Science and Technology* 4 (2002): 47-49.

<sup>4</sup> The main source text of *Shizhouzhi* is likely to be the 1737 or 1738 edition of Hugh Murray’s *Encyclopedia of Geography* (1834). See Xiao Zhizhi, “Cong ‘Shizhouzhi’ de bianyi kan Lin Zexu yanzhong de shijie” [Lin Zexu’s Concept of the World: A Study of the Editorship and Translation of his *A Gazetteer of Four Continents*], *Fujian luntan* 4 (1999): 51.

<sup>5</sup> Possibly for protecting the personal safety of his translators, most translations finished by Lin’s translators bore the name of Lin as the translator, such as his “*Shizhouzhi*” and “*Huashi yiyān*.” For more discussion about Lin’s involvement in the translations he commissioned, see Xiao Zhizhi 51-55.

<sup>6</sup> This short article was later collected in Wei Yuan’s 100-volume edition of *Haiguo tuzhi*, published in 1852.

*Unrestricted Commercial Intercourse with that Vast Empire: with Extracts from Authentic Documents* (1839).<sup>7</sup> Besides, a number of articles published in foreign magazines and newspapers in Canton and Macao were also consulted when Lin's translators were translating the article in question.<sup>8</sup> Like most of the other works done by his translators, the article also bore the name of Lin as the translator. Nevertheless, Lin was more like an editor of it because he barely knew English.<sup>9</sup> Hence, it is more likely that Lin had his translators translate a number of passages from different source texts into Chinese first, which he then edited and polished before he published it. Due to this personal involvement in editing the translations, Lin's personal viewpoint was sometimes mingled with those of the original authors. For instance, in his "Huashi yuyan" the subject "we" tends to refer to the foreigners, as "we shall venerate China differently" ["我等"敬中國尤當不同];<sup>10</sup> however, the object "us" did not always refer to the foreigners, but the Chinese, as "in case the enemies (the British troops) come ashore and attack our emplacements" [以防敵人上岸攻"我"砲臺]. This disagreement between a subject and its object suggests that there is more than one voice remarking on the Chinese in this article.

In "Huashi yuyan" the characters of the British and Europeans were compared to the Chinese both by the authors of the source texts and the editor. It is therefore important to distinguish the different perspectives of the original authors and the

<sup>7</sup> A British physician called Dr Hill, one of the shipwreck survivors of the British merchantman *Sunda*, mentioned that Lin has showed him two books and told him that parts of the books were already translated into Chinese. One of the books is *The Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China*, written by A. S. Thelwall (1795-1863), a Church of England clergyman; the other one, without its cover page, is likely to be J. F. Davis's *The Chinese*. See Tao Jing, "Lin Zexu: qingji zuzhi xixue fanyi de xianqu" [Lin Zexu: A Pioneer of Western Learning Translation in Qing Dynasty], *Journal of Lu'an Teachers College* 16.1 (2000): 49.

<sup>8</sup> See Shao Xueping and Lin Benchun 48-49.

<sup>9</sup> Before Lin came to Canton to ban opium smuggling, there was no evidence to show that he had any knowledge about the English language. However, after he recruited several hands to start his translation projects, he also started to learn English language. For instance, in his *Yangshi zalu* [Miscellaneous Notes about Foreign Affairs, 1846] Lin has transliterated a number of English vocabularies into Chinese. See Xiao Zhizhi 55.

<sup>10</sup> In other sentences like "我等"得知中國 and "我等"若信其不甚明白之書, the subjects are also referring to the British.

editor before one can correctly identify whether an image was a self-image or a hetero-image of the British or the Chinese. First, one of the foreign authors suggested that the Chinese, both the poor and the rich, had dedicated most of their youth to the study of literature and therefore their soldiers seemed to be less brave and daring than the Europeans. This statement reflects the foreign author's understandings of the traditional Chinese sense of value, which tend to value one's literary competence more than one's physical strength. In response to this observation, Lin suggested that the Chinese had enjoyed a peaceful life for decades, so they gradually lost their vigor and tended to behave weakly on the battlefields. Hence, the collective image of the Chinese as a weak people was not only a hetero-image held by the European observers, but also a self-image of the Chinese themselves. This negative image also reflects the peaceful inclination of the Chinese in general. If we investigate the diachronic significance of the image in question, we find that this image of the Chinese as a peace-loving people was around in European literary discourses as early as the thirteenth century. For instance, in Polo's *Travels* (1298), the author suggested that the Chinese could never be war-like soldiers.<sup>11</sup> A similar observation was made by the first British ambassador to China as well. In his report about his visit to China in 1793, Macartney also suggested that the Chinese soldiers were feeble and weak as they often carried fans and looked feminine.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the image of the Chinese as a feeble people has existed in the

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<sup>11</sup> See Latham 212.

<sup>12</sup> In his report Macartney mentioned the Chinese troops a number of times and his general evaluation of them is comparatively low. For instance, he said that the fanciful and picturesque uniforms of the Chinese troops not only made them look effeminate, but also made them move clumsily on the battlefields. Elsewhere Macartney compared the characters of the Tartars and the Chinese and suggested that "A military life is much more the bent of a Tartar than of a Chinese. The hardy education, the rough manners, the active spirit, the wandering disposition, the loose principles, the irregular conduct of the former, fit him better for the profession, practice, and pursuits of war, than the calm, regulated, domestic, philosophical, and moral habits of the latter. Warriors seem more naturally the offspring of Tartary, as literati are of China. The latter are chiefly conversant in the sciences of morals, and of the policy of government, which are often united in the contemplation, and in the works, of their lawgivers and philosophers." See Staunton, vol. 2, 135, 236.

Europe literary discourse for hundreds of years. Like some other images we will see later, this image can also be interpreted both from a negative and a positive perspective. From a negative perspective, it suggests that the Chinese were a defenceless people whose country may become an easy target for the militaristic Europeans; while from a positive perspective, it also suggests that they are a peaceful people and they seldom threaten the security of other countries. It therefore depends on the viewers, rather than the viewed, to decide the meanings of the images they construct.

Elsewhere Lin suggested that the Chinese were a clever and intelligent people and only the British could be considered as an equal in this regard.<sup>13</sup> To a certain degree, this statement shattered the conservative Chinese intellectuals' image of foreigners as less civilized races. In fact, being registered as one of the tributary states in an official document of the Qing government, Britain was deprived of her right to be addressed as an equal to China in Chinese discourse.<sup>14</sup> Hence, like most of his contemporaries, Lin also used many biased and derogatory terms to depict the British in his dairies, memorials, official correspondences, poems and private letters.<sup>15</sup> The derogative terms included calling the British dogs, sheep, chickens, and ghosts.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the tone that he adopted to address to the British, including Queen Victoria,<sup>17</sup> also reflected his arrogance as a Chinese official in the

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<sup>13</sup> Lin said that "Except for the British, no people in the world are as clever and intelligent as the Chinese." See Lin Zexu, "Huashi yiyen" [Foreigners on China], *Xiaofanghuzhai yudicongchao*, Wang Xifan ed., vol. 14 (1880, Taipei: Guang wen, 1962) N. pag.

<sup>14</sup> Britain was clearly denominated as a tributary state in the *Jiaqing chongxiu yitongzhi* [A Comprehensive Gazetteer of Emperor Jiaqing], completed in 1820 and printed in 1842. See Gong Yinyan 246-47; Ma Lianpo, *Wanqing diguo shiyexia de yingguo* [Late Qing Empire's View of Britain] (Beijing: Remin, 2003) 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> One of the most distinctive signs that reflects his contempt for foreigners is he always added a Chinese character component "口" [literally means mouth] to his references to the names of foreigners, foreign countries and ships. See Liu Bin, "Lin Zexu huayi guannian chuyi" [On Lin Zexu's Sino-Occident Ideology], *Zhonghua wenhua luntan* [Chinese Culture Forum] 2 (2006): 61.

<sup>16</sup> See Liu Bin 61.

<sup>17</sup> In 1839 Lin wrote a letter to Queen Victoria to protest the opium trade in China. This letter was written in the Chinese format of a dispatch [照會], which implied that the status of China was

face of foreigners.

However, after Lin arrived in Canton, he gradually changed his image of the British. He not only recruited translators to translate foreign works into Chinese,<sup>18</sup> but also associated with the law-abiding British and treated them kindly.<sup>19</sup> There seemed to emerge a sharp contrast between his former and later attitude towards the British. In fact, as Lin came to have a better understanding of foreigners, he started to distinguish the ill-intended foreigners, such as the British opium smugglers and the British troops, from the friendly and law-abiding British and other westerners.<sup>20</sup> He came to realize that the British were not as inhumane as he used to regard them. Instead, most of them seemed to be as reasonable and sensible as the Chinese.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, in the memorials that he submitted to Emperor Daoguang he still

superior to that of Britain. Lin asked Capitan Warner of the British merchant vessel Thomas Coutts to bring it to Britain in 1840. However, the British Foreign Office refused to receive it when they were informed the content of the letter. The English version of the letter was published in Elijah Coleman Bridgman's *Chinese Repository*, vol. 8, in May 1839, in the hope that at least some officials of the British Government will be able to read it. For more information about the format and translation of this letter, see Guo Weidong, "'Zhaohui' yu zhongguo waijiao wenshu jindai fanshi de chugou" [The "Diplomatic Note" and the Initial Format of Modern Diplomatic Documents in China], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 3 (2000): 98.

<sup>18</sup> In Lin's time, it was against the law to translate foreign texts into Chinese for personal purposes. However, as soon as he arrived in Canton, he immediately asked people to translate foreign books and newspapers for him. It therefore suggests that Lin's attitude to foreign culture was more open than most of his contemporaries. See Liu Bin 59.

<sup>19</sup> There are two incidents to illustrate Lin's friendly attitude to the good-natured foreigners. First, when Lin ordered to destroy the opium that he collected from the illegal foreign merchants in 1839, some Americans asked to watch how he accomplished the job, he immediately granted their request. Second, he once kindly entertained some British survivors after their ship was demolished by a hurricane in China. As a high-ranked Chinese official, Lin did not observe the traditional regulation of separating the Chinese from the foreigners, but made friends with them and tried to understand their culture. This suggests that Lin's attitude to the foreigners was different from that of his conservative colleagues. See Liu Bin 59.

<sup>20</sup> In his letter to Queen Victoria, Lin called the opium dealers "a class of evil foreigners" and "devilish persons." See Arthur Waley, *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1958) 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> In his *Letter of Advice to Queen Victoria* (1839), Lin said that "We have heard heretofore that your honorable ruler is kind and benevolent. . . We have also heard that the ships coming to Canton have all had regulations promulgated and given to them in which it is stated that it is not permitted to carry contraband goods. This indicates that the administrative orders of your honorable rule have been originally strict and clear." This compliment suggests that Lin does not treat all British citizens alike and he is willing to believe that the British opium merchants are only a small number of evil people who have brought disgrace on name of their own country. The letter is collected in A Ying's *Yapian zhanzheng wenxueji* [An Anthology of Opium War Literature], vol. 3 (Taipei: Guangya, 1982) 1264-66, while an English translation of the letter is available in Teng Ssuyu's *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1954) 24-27.

continued to use many negative phrases to dehumanize or demonize the British. For instance, he suggested that “the natural character of the British was as unpredictable as those of dogs and sheep” and “their intentions were as evil as those of ghosts and goblins.”<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that the British he was referring to were actually the illegal opium dealers and the British troops, not the British as a whole. In writing his memorials, Lin must have known that his readers were mostly conservative intellectuals, who usually regarded foreigners as less civilized people. In order to highlight the cultural difference between the Chinese and the less civilized foreigners, the conservatives often dehumanized the nature of “the others” and compared their natures to those of animals like dogs, foxes, sheep, swine, tigers or wolves, which more or less bore negative implications in Chinese language. By implying “the others” as peoples with animalities or comparing them to ghosts, the conservative Chinese intellectuals therefore unilaterally pronounced their superiority to “the others” in culture and humanity. Hence, for the purpose of showing that his opinion of the British was in accordance with his conservative colleagues and, more importantly, the emperor, Lin also used some stereotyped phrases and terminologies to name the British wherever necessary.

As a whole, we can perceive two different images of the British in Lin’s writings. One is the negative image of the British opium merchants and troops, who are described by Lin as “arrogant, boastful, conceited, deceitful, extravagant, greedy, sly, vicious and unethical.”<sup>23</sup> They are repeatedly compared to animals like dogs and

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<sup>22</sup> The original Chinese phrases are “犬羊之性無常” and “鬼魅居心.” The translation is mine. For more Lin’s negative descriptions about the natures of the British opium smugglers, see Zheng Jianshun, “Lin Zexu dui ‘yiqing’ de tanfang ji renshi” [Lin Zexu’s Investigation and Understanding of ‘Foreign Affairs’], *Journal of Henan Normal University* 33.2 (2006): 146-50.

<sup>23</sup> Referring to the British, particularly the opium dealers, Lin says “The natures of these unethical foreigners are greedy and sly. Superficially, they are arrogant and boastful; at heart, they are timid and suspicious [此輩奸夷性貪而狡，外則桀驁夸飾，內實慙怯多疑]; Their natures are extravagant and greedy [該夷性奢而貪]; Their nature is to meek towards the brutal and brutal towards the meek [畏強欺弱，是其稟性所成]; Their nature is [as inhuman] as that of dogs and sheep, and their

sheep or even ghosts to suggest that their humanity and morality are much lower than the ones of the Chinese. Another is the neutral image of the British public, whom are generally considered as humane as the Chinese. Hence, as Lin wrote about the British, he made clear distinctions between the friendly ones and the unfriendly trouble makers, though most scholars seem to fail to notice this distinction in Lin's writings. They, such as Fairbank and his followers, often judge by the arrogant tone of Lin's letter to Queen Victoria to suggest that Lin's attitude towards the British was contemptuous and consequently his image of them was completely negative. They seem to forget that the format of Lin's letter was actually conforming to the regulation of Qing government's international correspondence and Britain was *de facto* registered as a tributary state in Qing government's imperial document. It is important to bear this in mind when we analyze Lin's image of the British. Hence, in his "Huashi yiyan," he did not use any vocabulary to dehumanize or demonize the British public at all. The alter-images that Lin attributed to the British in this article are brave, civilized and intelligent; while the self-images of the Chinese are alert, intelligent, but pusillanimous.<sup>24</sup>

### B. Wei Yuan's "Yingjili xiaoji"

During the first Opium War (1839-42), many Chinese intellectuals published articles or books to introduce their immediate enemy and the western world to their

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intention is [as vicious] as that of demons [爲其犬羊成性，鬼魅居心]; Their second nature is conceited and deceitful. The more direr straits they are in, more commonly they wish to appear as arrogant and boastful [其虛驕性成，愈窮蹙時，愈欲顯其桀驁]". See Zheng Jianshun 148-49.

<sup>24</sup> Lin suggested that the Chinese are "not as brave as the Westerners" [惟武勇不若西洋]; adding that "the alertness and intelligence of the Chinese can only be matched by the British" [中國人之聰明靈變，除英吉利外他國皆不及] and "the scholars are weak-minded, not good at fighting . . . and have lost their rigidity" [疲儒不善於戰 . . . 剛氣已退]. Besides, he noted that the arms and medicine of the Chinese are inferior. See Lin, "Huashi yiyan," N. pag.



fellow countrymen. Some of them had direct contact with British servicemen on different occasions, such as interrogating the British captives or negotiating with the British military officials, their articles therefore tended to reflect a down-to-earth picture of the British based upon their personal observations or the first-hand materials available to them.

Wei Yuan (1794-1857), a Chinese officer who had experiences of witnessing how his colleagues interrogated British captives during the first Opium War, was one of the few Chinese intellectuals who did not consider the British as barbarians and regard their civilization inferior to that of the Chinese. Wei showed a strong tendency to seek truth and be objective in his early years as an intellectual. At the age of thirty one, he was invited by He Changling (1785?-1848) to edit a collection called *Huangchao jingshi wenbian* [Collection of Memorials on Statecraft, 1826], in which he collected around two thousand and two hundred articles about academics, economics, educations, politics and societies by early and contemporary distinguished scholars and general intellectuals. The practical orientation of the editorship was a challenge to the contemporary literary fashion, which tended to value the works of close textual criticism and underestimate the articles with pragmatic ideas.<sup>25</sup> The pragmatic characteristic of Wei's writings is probably best illustrated in the following poem:

He presumes that he knows all the mountains when he unrolls the map  
of the five sacred mountains;  
However, his knowledge of mountains may not be even as good as one  
foot of a woodcutter.  
He assumes that he knows everything about the oceans when he talks  
about the width of them;

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<sup>25</sup> Wang Jiajian, "Wei Yuan," *Bao Shicheng, Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan, Feng Guifeng*, ed. Wang Shounan (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1999) 163.

In fact, his knowledge of oceans may not be even as good a glance of an overseas businessman.  
 He believes that he knows all the different tastes when he has studied pedigrees of all delicacies of every kind;  
 Nevertheless, his knowledge of food may not even as good as one sip of a master chef.<sup>26</sup>

Emphasizing that one should not exclusively rely on reading books to acquire knowledge of the world, but should try to verify the information from books by personal practices, if possible, Wei therefore showed his personality as a pragmatist. Elsewhere Wei also suggested that if the language barriers between peoples could be demolished, all the human beings in the world might be able to live together like a big family and they would be able to exchange their ideas and learning more effectively. He writes that

Looking at the four directions of the world, it occurs to the sage that he should sail abroad on a raft.

He regrets that people talk and write in different languages and neither his pen nor his tongue enables him to communicate with others. . .

He feels like a deaf-mute person in a strange land; and it is both troublesome and annoying to converse with others through interpretations.

If the language barriers can be demolished, all the people in the world might be able to converse in the same tone.

One may set sail from Yanggu<sup>27</sup> in the morning, and spend the night in a harbour in Daqin.<sup>28</sup>

Not only the learning of different lands could be shared reciprocally, but also the customs could be exchanged compatibly.

All the people in the world might therefore treat one another like

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<sup>26</sup> The original text is “披五岳之圖以爲知山，不如樵夫之一足；談滄溟之廣以爲知海，不如估客之一瞥；八珍之譜以爲知味，不如庖丁之一啜。” See Wei Yuan, *Guweitang neiwai ji* [A Complete Collection of the Guwei Room] (1878, Taipei: Wenhai, 1985) 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Yanggu*, literally means the sun valley, refers to the place where the sun rises.

<sup>28</sup> *Daqin* is an old Chinese name that formerly refers to the Roman Empire, but generally refers to Europe afterwards.

brothers; and they may also live together like countrymen. . .  
 Though there are differences between the East and the West, the North  
 and the South,  
 The classics of Confucianism and Mencius will no longer be taught  
 exclusively in our Sacred Land.<sup>29</sup>

This poem suggests that Wei had an unprejudiced attitude towards different cultures and races. Instead of honouring the Chinese culture singularly and despising the cultures of others like many of his forerunners and contemporaries, he encouraged peoples from different countries to have cultural and intellectual dialogues. He also believes in cosmopolitanism, that all peoples in the world could live together like a family, a concept which was not commonly found in the works of his contemporary intellectuals because China was having more and more economic conflicts and military skirmishes with the westerners at that time. If we take the historical milieu into consideration, we can see that Wei's open-mindedness is comparatively rare. His objectivity and open-mindedness could also be found in many of his works about the westerners as the "Others."

In terms of Wei's involvement in the first Opium War, he was not only an observer, but also a participator. In 1840, he was invited by a colleague to go to Ningpo to observe how the local Chinese officials interrogated the British captives and therein he was able to get some firsthand materials about the British and their country. In 1841, he was appointed to go to Dinghai to deal with the postwar

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<sup>29</sup> The original text is "四遠所願觀，聖有乘桴想。所悲異語言，筆舌均恍然。 . . . 所至對瘡痍，重譯殊煩快。若能決此藩，萬國同一吮。朝發陽谷舟，暮宿大秦港。學問同獻酬，風俗同抵掌。一家兄弟春，九夷南陌黨。 . . . 東西海異同，南北極上下。直將孔周書，不囿禹州講。" See Wei Yuan, *Wei Yuan Quanjì* [A Complete Collection of Wei Yuan's Works], ed. The Editorial Committee of Wei Yuan Quanjì, vol. 12 (Changsha: Yuelu, 2004) 497-98. The complete poem is available in Wei Yuan, *Wei Yuan Ji* [Works of Wei Yuan], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987) 580. This poem is likely written before 1830, more than a decade before Wei started to write about the Europeans. See Xia Jianqin, "Wei Yuan de youhuan shi" [The Poetry Concerns about the Fate of the Nation by Wei Yuan], *Shuwu* 7-8 (2001), 28 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.housebook.com.cn/20017-8/8.htm>>.

problems caused by the British invasion.<sup>30</sup> His account of Britain and the British therefore, by comparison, presented a more realistic picture of the subjects than those by most of his contemporary intellectuals.

In one of his famous accounts of the British, “Yingjili xiaoji” [A Short Account of the English,<sup>31</sup> 1843],<sup>32</sup> Wei adopted an objective perspective to depict the British intruders. He neither condemned the British for seizing lands from other countries by force, nor reproached them for exporting opium to China. Let us start with his description of the visage of the British. With regard to the reason why the Europeans were generally called “red-hair” [紅毛] by the Chinese, he explains that

The British, the Dutch, and the France all have red curly hair. They do not shave their faces or wear their hair in a bun or a pigtail. They only trim their hair and keep it no longer than two inches. The only ones who wear long hair are their women. This is the reason why the Chinese call them ‘red-hair.’<sup>33</sup>

This passage illustrates that the nickname “red-hair” simply refers to the colour of the hair of the Europeans and there is no prejudice against them in it. In addition, as he mentioned the British etiquette, monogamy, religion, as well as the social freedom enjoyed by the British women, which were all very different from those of

<sup>30</sup> Wang Jiajian 172.

<sup>31</sup> Here I choose to use “English,” instead of “Britain” because the Chinese term *Yingjili* is a corresponding transliteration of the former.

<sup>32</sup> With regard to the date when the article was first known to readers, most scholars tend to take 1841 as the year when the article was first known. Nevertheless, in the article Wei borrowed many descriptions of the British from Yao Ying’s “Yingjili diyushuo” [On the Map of Britain], which was presented to Emperor Daoguang in 1842, it therefore makes the date of the work problematic. In a private correspondence Liu Shihufeng from Academia Sinica explained that Wei went to interrogate a British captive named P. Anstruther in Zhejiang in 1840 and based on Anstruther’s statement he wrote “Yingjili xiaoji” in 1841. Nevertheless, Wei did not publish the article right away. He revised the draft of the article based on the aforementioned report of Yao Ying and then collected it in his own 50-volume *Haiguo Tuzhi*, which was sent to press in 1843. Hence, it is 1843, rather than 1841, that this article was first known to the public. I am indebted to Liu for this explanation.

<sup>33</sup> The original text is “英吉利與荷蘭、法藍西，其髮皆卷而微紅。不薙、不髻、不辮、惟翦、留寸餘不使長。其長髮者為婦人耳[爾]，故中國以紅毛呼之。”

the Chinese, he did not consider the British barbarous or less civilized for believing in a different deity, paying no tribute to their ancestors, giving female heirs an equal right to inherit the throne, not performing kowtow to show their respect for their monarchs, or not keeping their women at home. Instead, it is more likely that Wei had a high regard for the red-haired foreigners and recognized that some of their practices were probably better than those of the Chinese. For instance, as he mentioned how the British appointed their military officers, he suggested that all the candidates were tested on their competences in using firearms before they were appointed. Once they were employed, they were paid handsome salaries.<sup>34</sup> This reference to the British military officers' competence and knowledge is a reminder that many Chinese officers did not even have enough knowledge to handle the firearms in their hands.<sup>35</sup> As for the employment of civil officials, Wei mentioned that the incompetent ones would be either removed from their offices or degraded to the lower ranks. This compliment on the British scheme of dismissing incompetent civil officials probably reflects Wei's disappointment to see that some incompetent Chinese officials, particularly those who knew nothing but the skills of composing stereotyped writings,<sup>36</sup> were seldom demoted to lower ranks, let alone dismissed.

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<sup>34</sup> In his *Haiguotuzhi (Records and Maps of the World)*, published in 1842, Wei further compared the salaries of the Chinese soldiers to those of the British soldiers and suggested that the Chinese soldiers often run away from the battlefields because they were poorly paid. He proposed that the wages of the Chinese soldiers should be increased, otherwise, no one would risk their lives to fight for their country. See Wang Jiajian 180-81.

<sup>35</sup> In a poem entitled "Putuo guanchao xing" [A Trip to See the Waves at Putuo], Wei wrote that "The monk said Putuo Temple is only a temple on an island, but both the Dutch and the British are eager to get it. . . . If there is no official like Zhuge Liang (181-234, one of the greatest Chinese militarists in the Three Kingdoms era, 220-280) in our troops, it is still useless even though you have all the gunboats." The words divulge Wei's disappointment to see that there are no competent military officials in the Chinese troops to make good use of the weapons in their possession. The poem is cited in Xia Jianqin's "Wei Yuan de youhuan shi." Besides, in his "Daoguang yangsou zhengfu ji" (1843), Wei also pointed out that many civil officials, who probably knew nothing about firearms, were appointed to lead troops to fight against the British soldiers. See Wei Yuan, "Daoguang yangsou zhengfu ji," *Yapian zhanzheng wenxue ji*, vol. 3, 1143-44, 1148, 1150, 1161.

<sup>36</sup> The capability of composing a beautiful eight-part essay [八股文], a kind of stereotyped writing that is known for its rigidity of form and paucity of ideas, is the basic skill to pass the imperial civil service examinations and win oneself a government post. Many Chinese intellectuals therefore have spent most of their time to master the arts of writing stereotyped articles in the hope of being granted

Therefore, as a whole, though the British are different from the Chinese in many aspects, Wei seems to suggest that Britain was a better governed country. His image of Britain and the British is, generally speaking, favourable. The British are a courteous, humane and talented people. Their soldiers are brave and their women more fairly treated.

Wei further suggested that the Chinese intellectuals should recognize the superiority of the Europeans in the developments of science and politics and discard their prejudice against the Europeans. He suggests that the names *Man*, *Di*, *Qiang* and *Yi*<sup>37</sup> were used by people of former generations to refer to those people who did not adopt the Chinese culture. However, many foreigners in China were actually very courteous and knowledgeable, it was therefore debatable whether the Chinese should call them *Yi* or *Di*.<sup>38</sup> Reminding his fellow countrymen that the Europeans

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an official post for their literary skill eventually. As many of them tended to pay no attention to the worldly issues before they passed the imperial examinations, their ability and knowledge of administration were therefore questioned by the practical-minded Wei Yuan. Though Wei himself was also given an official post after he passed the imperial examinations with his stereotyped writings, he did not like the idea at all of granting people official posts by the beauty of their stereotyped writings. In many pieces of his works he suggested that the intellectuals should pay more attention to learn the practical knowledge than to master the techniques of writing stereotyped writings. For more discussion about his condemnation on appointing government officials by the competitors' ability of composing stereotyped writings, see Wang Jiajian 184-85.

<sup>37</sup> *Man* [蠻], *Di* [狄], *Qiang* [戎] and *Yi* [夷] are the names referring to the aboriginal tribes living in the south, north, west and east of ancient China. In book III, "The Royal Regulations", of *Liji* [Collection of Treatises on the Rules of Propriety and Ceremonial Usages], we read that "The people of those five regions-the Middle states, and the Zung, Î, (and other wild tribes round them)--had all their several natures, which they could not be made to alter. The tribes on the east were called Î. They had their hair unbound, and tattooed their bodies. Some of them ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the south were called Man. They tattooed their foreheads, and had their feet turned in towards each other. Some of them (also) ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the west were called Zung. They had their hair unbound, and wore skins. Some of them did not eat grain-food. Those on the north were called Tî. They wore skins of animals and birds, and dwelt in caves. Some of them also did not eat grain-food." [中國戎夷，五方之民，皆有性也，不可推移。東方曰夷，被髮文身，有不火食者矣。南方曰蠻，雕題交趾，有不火食者矣。西方曰戎，被髮衣皮，有不粒食者矣。北方曰狄，衣羽毛穴居，有不粒食者矣。] See James Legge trans., *Li Ki* [also known as *Li Ji* or *The Book of Rites*, c.200 BC], ed. F. M. Muller, 1885, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 27, 25 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/liki/liki03.htm>> and *Li Ji* [禮記], 25 Feb. 2007 <<http://ef.cdpa.nsysu.edu.tw/ccw/01/ligi.htm>>.

<sup>38</sup> In his preface to José Martinho Marques' *Xinin shi dili beikao* [A New Exegetical Reference of Geography](1847), which was written in Chinese around 1845 and collected in Wei's 100-volume *Haiguo tuzhi* in 1852, Wei suggested that "The names Man, Di, Qiang, Yi were used to refer to those cruel and violent people who know nothing about the good moral conducts of our emperors. Therefore, our former emperors tended to treat Yi and Di like animals and never interfered with their

had nothing in common with those less civilized tribes that used to live outside the borders of China in ancient times, Wei therefore questioned the legitimacy of the conservative Chinese intellectuals' ideology of considering the Europeans as uncivilized people. In his eyes, the British were as civil as the Chinese and their civilization and culture were by no means inferior to those of the Chinese. So, as a whole, the image that Wei attributes to the British in this article is generally positive. The positive image of the British, on the one hand, reflects the author's worries about the future of his own country in the face of a powerful country like Britain; on the other hand, it also offers his fellow countrymen a positive dream to strive for. Hence, in the eyes of his contemporaries, Wei's positive images of the British are more likely to be a utopian one which he uses to criticize his own country and countrymen.

After the first Opium War, which ended with a defeat of the Chinese government in 1842, Wei wrote a pamphlet called *Daoguang yangsou zhengfu ji* (1843)<sup>39</sup> [An Account of Fighting against the Western Vessels in the Reign of

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ways of life. However, this does not mean that all the non-Chinese, some who may have a high moralization, should be considered as barbarous as Yi or Di . . . . We have to know that some of our guests from afar are people with manners and righteousness. They not only know astrology and geography, but also have a thorough understanding of physics and history. They are unusual talents of the world and virtuous friends from overseas. Is it reasonable for us to call them Yi and Di?" [夫蠻狄羌夷之名，專指殘虐性情之民，未知王化者言之，故曰先王之待夷狄如禽獸然，以不治治之，非謂本國而外，凡教化之國皆謂夷狄也。 . . . 誠知夫遠客之中有明禮儀，上通天象，下察地理，旁徹物情，貫串今古者，是皆瀛環之奇士，域內之良友，尚可稱之曰夷狄乎？] See Wei Yuan ed., *Zeng Kuang Haikuo Tuzhi* [A Expanded Edition of *Haikuo Tuzhi*], vol. 4 (1852, Taipei: Guiting, 1978) 1061. It is likely that Marques' *Xinshi dili beikao* is available as an offprint in 1845, but the extant earliest edition is the one collected in Pan Shicheng's *Haishan Xianguan Congshu* [Collection of Books Printed by the Ocean-mountain Recluse House], published in 1847. As Wei incorporated part of the book into his *Haikuo Tuzhi* in 1852, he shortened the title of the book into *Dili Beikao*. For more information about availability and circulation of Marques' works, see Zhao Lifeng and Wu Zhen, "Aomen tusheng puren hanxuejia Majishi yu 'Xinshi dili beikao'" [The Macaonese Sinologist Marques and Xin-shi Di-li Bei-kao], *Journal of Jinan University* [Philosophy and Social Sciences] 121 (2006): 131-32.

<sup>39</sup> The earliest title of this pamphlet is *Daoguang Yisou Zhengfu Ji* [An Account of the Fighting against the Foreign Vessels in the Reign of Daoguang], first seen in the third edition of Wei's *Shengwu Ji* [An Account of the Wise and the Brave] in 1846. However, there is no text but only the title available in this edition. In 1878, the pamphlet was collected in *Shengwu Ji* and a new title *Daoguang Yangsou Zhengfu Ji* is given by the editor. See Xia Jianqin, "'Wei Yuan quan ji' ge shu banben gaishuo" [A survey of the editions of *Collected Works of Wei Yuan*] *Chuanshan xuekan* 3

Daoguang] to account for the cause and development of the war. This pamphlet criticizes many incompetent Chinese officials, who either secretly helped the British in the war or fled from the battlefields but were rewarded or praised by the court afterward. It also defends the names of many brave but vilified Chinese officials. The pamphlet was never published by Wei when he was alive because the post-war government was in the hands of the capitulators. Nevertheless, the pamphlet was widely circulated in the format of manuscript anonymously. The various titles of manuscripts include *Yingbo rukou ji* [An Account of the Invading British Vessels], *Yingbo kouhai ji* [An Account of the British Vessels Invading Our Seas], *Yingyi rukou ji* [An Account of the Invading British], *Yisou zhengfu ji* [An Account of Fighting against Foreign Vessels], *Yisou rukou ji* [An Account of the Invading Foreign Vessels] and *Yisou kouhai ji* [An Account of the Sea-invading Foreign Vessels].<sup>40</sup>

In this pamphlet most references to the British were addressed with neutral terms like *Yang ren* [洋人, foreign people], *Yang bing* [洋兵, foreign soldiers], *Yang shang* [洋商, foreign merchants], *Ying ren* [英人, English people], *Xi bing* [西兵, Western soldiers] and *Xi ren* [西人, Western people]. The popular names applied to the British like *Guizi* [鬼子, ghosts], *Ni yi* [逆夷, disobedient foreigners], *Yang gui* [洋鬼, foreign devils] and *Quan yang* [犬羊, sheep and dogs] were discarded because these terms are ethnically discriminative against the British. Wei's impartial attitude towards the British could also be observed in the following examples. In terms of Lin Zexu's tough regulations for terminating the opium

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(2003): 55.

<sup>40</sup> See Shi Ying, "Bao han aiguo sixiang de lishi zhuzuo—du Wei Yuan 'Daoguang Yangsou Zhengfu Ji'" [A historical work with rich patriotic thinking—Reading Wei Yuan's *An Account of Fighting against the Western Vessels in the Reign of Daoguang*], *Tianzhong xuekan* 14.3 (1999): 85; Xia Jianqin, "'Wei Yuan quan ji' ge shu banben gaishuo" 55.



trade,<sup>41</sup> Wei suggested that it might be too severe for the British to comply. For instance, he suggested that when Sir Charles Elliot (1801-1875) procrastinated to hand over the British suspects, his action did not look like he intended to defy the Chinese laws.<sup>42</sup> These two cases suggested that Wei was an impartial person. Moreover, though he severely condemned the British opium-smugglers for selling opium to China to harm the Chinese physically and psychologically and the British soldiers for destroying or plundering the belongings of the Chinese citizens, he was not blinded by his patriotism or personal hatred. Apart from the deeds done by the British opium-smugglers and soldiers, Wei did not say anything bad about the British.

In one account about a British naval commander named James John Gordon Bremer, Wei noted that Bremer was sorry to hear the news that Lin Zexu was dismissed by the court. Bremer says

Mr Lin is indeed a good viceroy, who has courage, uprightness, and talent, but unfamiliar with foreign state of affairs. It is right for him to stop opium traffic, but it is wrong to stop all business. If our business in China is forbidden, my country will not be able to survive. That is the reason why we have to exert all our strength to strive for chances for business. Our troops are by no means sent here to take revenge on Viceroy Lin for banning the opium traffic.<sup>43</sup>

Here the British commodore was presented as a very sensible person. This reference to Bremer also suggests that Wei had no intention to dehumanize or

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<sup>41</sup> Lin demands that once a ship is found carrying opium, all the goods on board and the ship will be confiscated and the people who bring opium into China will be immediately executed. See Wei, "Daoguang Yangsou Zhengfu Ji" 1134.

<sup>42</sup> A Chinese civilian called Lin Weixi was killed by a group of British sailors in May 1839 and the Chinese government asked the British chief superintendent Charles Elliot to hand out the criminals for punishment. However, Elliot refused to turn in the criminals and put a notice to offer a reward to anyone who can identify the suspects. See Wei Yuan, "Daoguang Yangsou Zhengfu Ji" 1134.

<sup>43</sup> Wei Yuan, "Daoguang Yangsou Zhengfu Ji" 1139.

demonize the British, even though many of them had seriously devastated his country. His unbiased attitude to foreigners had little in common with those of his contemporaries. His criticism of those incompetent Chinese officials and his praise of the superiority of the British force suggested that the Chinese should imitate the British to improve themselves.

To sum up, the images of the British in Wei's works barely bore any mark of ethnical discrimination. Though his depictions of the British were not completely positive, he did not indiscriminately condemn all the British as a whole. Instead, he distinguished the ill-intentioned British opium-smugglers and the British troops from the general British public and praised the latter ones. As a matter of fact, Wei was one of the few Chinese writers who were willing to depict the British as an equal or even a superior during the Opium Wars. In Wei's works, the British were generally depicted as civilized, intelligent, rational, warlike, while their country is portrayed as powerful, rich and well-governed.

### III. Conservative writers' images of the British and the Chinese

#### A. Xiao Lingyu's "Yingjili ji"

In 1842 a local Chinese officer called Xiao Lingyu wrote an article, "Yingjili ji" [A Note of England],<sup>44</sup> to comment on the interactions between China and Britain from their earliest contact in the early seventeenth century to the present day. The author also gave a sketch of how Britain vied with other European countries like Holland, France, Portugal and Spain for colonies and commercial ports around the world. His sources included geographical accounts,<sup>45</sup> history,<sup>46</sup> imperial archives,

<sup>44</sup> Here I choose to use "England," rather than "Britain," because the former is more close to the transliteration of the original Chinese term *Yingjili* [英吉利].

<sup>45</sup> The geographical accounts that Xiao consulted include *Zhifang waiji* [World Atlas, 1623] by the Italian Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) [whose Chinese name is 艾儒略], *Haiguo wenjianlu* [Travels of the Seas] by Chen Lunjiong in 1730 and *Zhouche wenjianlu* [Travels by Boats and Cars] by Jiang

a local chronicle,<sup>47</sup> personal interviews and his own observations. Possibly influenced by the contemporary literary fashion of textual criticism, Xiao carefully annotated every single piece of information that he borrowed from other sources and corrected the mistakes made by other authors.<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly, Xiao's article is one of the most comprehensive accounts about the British available at that time.<sup>49</sup>

In terms of the nature of the article, it is usually classified by scholars as a piece of historical narrative because the author's main focus seems to be on the commercial and political conflicts and interactions between China and Britain. Nevertheless, Xiao commented on not only the conflicts and interactions between China and Britain, but also the customs and fashions of the British and their general characteristics. By studying Xiao's article we may learn both his personal image of the British and the collective image of the objects held by his predecessors and contemporaries.

On the connotation embedded in the image of the other, Daniel-Henri Pageaux suggests that the image of "the Other" often simultaneously conveys certain self-images of the viewer, the narrator, or the writer. It is because when the narrator narrates "the Other," the narrator tends to deny "the Other" and turns to narrate "the self."<sup>50</sup> According to this principle, as we examine the images of the British

Fan (1761-1831).

<sup>46</sup> The history book that Xiao consulted was Jiang Liangqi's *Donghua lu* [Records from within the Eastern Gate], published in 1765.

<sup>47</sup> The local chronicle that Xiao referred to is *Dinghai xianzhi* [Chronicle of the Dinghai County].

<sup>48</sup> Having the experience of observing the British at close hand, Xiao was able to examine the validity of his sources. In his account he refuted the old saying that the British soldiers could not bend their knees when they were wearing puttees. Nevertheless, quoting from Jiang Fan's *Zhouche wenjianlu*, he also made the mistake of assuming that Britain used to be subject to Holland before the former became an independent country. In fact, this historical mistake about the history of Britain was repeated in a number of accounts for nearly a century, such as the *Aomen jilue* [Sketch Notes on Macao], finished by Yin Guangren and Zhang Ruling in 1751, the *Huangqing zhigong tu* [Map of the Barbarians from All under Heaven Who Offer Tribute to the Court], finished in 1761 and pictures added in 1805, and the *Hongmaofan yingjili kaolue* [An Elementary Research on the Red-haired Foreigners called English], finished by Wang Wentai in 1841. For more information about this mistake, see Gong Yingyan 240-41.

<sup>49</sup> This article was later collected in Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi*. See Ma Lianpo 30-31.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel-Henri Pageaux, "Imagerie," *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue* [Imagology of Comparative

presented in Xiao's narrative, we will also be able to see how the author and his fellow conservative intellectuals depict themselves.

Unlike the works by Wei Yuan, Xie Qinggao, or Ye Zhongjin, Xiao's work reads more like an official report for the throne because both its language and format conform to the regulations of official writings<sup>51</sup> and its perspective on the British seems to be completely in accordance with the one of the Chinese ruling class. Based upon this observation, we may regard Xiao a representative of the contemporary conservative Chinese intellectuals and his image of the British to be a typical one shared by most conservative Chinese intellectuals at that time.

Like most Chinese intellectuals of that time, including the extreme conservatives, Xiao also admitted that the British were superior to the Chinese in the aspect of mechanical sciences (i.e. the material life). Nevertheless, he equally believed that the British were inferior to the Chinese in humanity and morality (i.e. the spiritual life). In his "Yingjili ji" he agreed with most of his contemporaries and generously applauded the achievements of the British in machinery, military science and navigation. Meanwhile, like most of his predecessors and contemporaries, he also suggested that the British were so eager to seek riches around the world that their humanity tended to be vulgar and their morality degenerate. His judgment is possibly resulted from his Confucian ideology that a person of noble character and integrity should seek the righteousness to perfect one's own morality, rather than to seek after profit.<sup>52</sup>

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Literature], trans. Meng Hua, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 157.

<sup>51</sup> In this text all the appellations referring to the Chinese emperors were carefully addressed with reverence, while the British was addressed as *Yingyi* [英夷, English foreigner] or *Hongmaofan* [紅毛番, red-haired barbarians] and given no sign of reverence.

<sup>52</sup> Both Confucius (551-479 BC) and Mengzi (372-289 BC or 385-303/302 BC) have given numerous comments to emphasize the importance of pursuing righteousness and the danger of indulging oneself in seeking fortunes. They even suggested that these two drives defined the natures of a gentleman and a mean man. For instance, Confucius once suggested that "A gentleman considers what is right; the vulgar consider what will pay." [君子喻於義，小人喻於利。]. Mengzi also said that "He who

Xiao's strategy of picturing the British was to beautify "the self" and to smear "the Other" at the same time. On the one hand, he suggested that British businessmen in Canton admired and copied Chinese fashions; on the other hand, he called them "Manyi" [uncivilized foreigners] and described their characters as crafty and greedy [貪狡], insincere [無誠信], ferocious [獷悍], greedy [素貪], wild and unruly [桀驁]. The self-images of the Chinese mirrored from these alter-images of the British were civilized, contented, moderate, peace-loving and temperate.

Xiao suggested that the Chinese had to teach the uncivilized British the value of honesty and put them under the former's control because the latter's nature was as greedy, riotous, undisciplined and wild as the savage Huns, who made lots of troubles on the northwestern borders of China in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD). Here the assimilation between the British and the Huns is significant. Ruth Amossy and Anne Herschberg-Pierrot suggest that during the process of categorizing and generalizing an object, a stereotype often helps the subject to simplify and compress the reality. It often leads one to adopt a formulized or distorted perspective to perceive the object and eventually results in producing a prejudice against the object.<sup>53</sup> Suggesting that the British were like the Huns, Xiao offered his readers a set of substantial references and images to create their own images of the British. This method of assimilating a new or less familiar object to a familiarized or

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rises at cock-crowing, and addresses himself earnestly to the practice of virtue, is a disciple of Shun. He who rises at cock-crowing, and addresses himself earnestly to the pursuit of gain, is a disciple of Chih [the robber Chih]. If you want to know what separates Shun from Chih, it is simply this: the interval between *the thought of gain* and *the thought of virtue*." [雞鳴而起，孳孳爲善者，舜之徒也。雞鳴而起，孳孳爲利者，跖之徒也。欲知舜與跖之分，無他，利與善之間也。]. Seeking the righteousness and rejecting oneself from the temptation of fortune is part of the core value of the Confucian philosophy. Hence, as the British merchants came to China to seek for fortune, it was no wonder that many conservative Chinese intellectuals labeled them as greed-driven people and held a contemptuous attitude to judge their deeds. English translations of Confucius and Mengzi's words are rendered by James Legge, see his *The Analects of Confucius* (1861, Springfield: Templegate, 1999) 23; *The Works of Mencius* (1895, New York: Dover, 1970) 464.

<sup>53</sup> See Ruth Amossy and Anne Herschberg-Pierrot, *Sutao yu taoyu: yuyan, yuyong ji shehui de lilun yanjiu* [Stéréotypes et clichés: langue, discours, société], trans. Ding Xiaohui (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 2003) 28.

stereotypical one not only effectively reduces the readers' unfamiliarity with the object in question, but also helps the readers to locate the object in their own cognition and imagination more expeditiously. Therefore, by implying that the British were similar to the Huns in terms of their characteristics and natures, Xiao created a stereotypical image of the British in a simple but effective way because the Chinese already had a rich collection of vocabularies for the Huns in their literature. Besides, as Xiao compared the British to the Huns, he also drew forth something from the readers which Said termed as a "textual attitude." Regarding this attitude, Said suggests that it will be elicited "when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one has recourse not only to what in one's previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, as Xiao associated the unfamiliar British with the familiar Huns, it might not only recall the readers' former reading experiences about the negative images of the Huns and then apply them to the British indiscriminately, but also stimulate the readers' fear and hatred against the Huns and then apply them mechanically to the British likewise.

In addition to associating the British with the Huns, Xiao also suggests that it is important to separate the British from the Chinese in case the refined Chinese culture being degraded or destroyed by the British. It is interesting to note that few of the images attributed to the Chinese and the British were supported by any hard evidence. Instead, they are mostly arbitrary and subjective. It therefore illustrates the monologic characteristic of image formation, which means that the object being depicted has no right to speak for itself in the process of image construction.

The imagological significance of Xiao's work can be summarized as follows. First, generally speaking, Xiao's images of the British did not contradict the ones

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<sup>54</sup> See Said, *Orientalism* 93.

proposed by former or contemporary conservative Chinese officials and neither did he question their validity. Judging by the tone of his narrative, Xiao was more inclined to support the official views of the British than to challenge them, in which the British were generally depicted as a more talented but a less civilized and humane people. His overall image of the British is therefore an “ideological” one in nature as it shows no inclination to subvert the existing official images of the British at all.

Xiao’s work also mirrored a certain anxiety. After acknowledging the scientific superiority of the British during the first Opium War, Chinese intellectuals desperately needed to find something that could help them to mend their fragile self-confidence. They found that both noble humanity and refined morality were something that the Chinese had been proud of themselves for thousands of years and both qualities were regarded by them as important indicators to differentiate the civilized people, the Chinese, from the savages, “the Others.” Hence, in the hope of saving their self-confidence and self-respect, they attributed several negative clichés against foreigners to defame the humanity and morality of the British. In their narratives, they often used a dichotomy to embellish themselves and to demonize others.

### **B. Yao Ying’s “Yingjili ditushuo”**

During the first Opium War, a number of British troops attacked Taiwan and had several skirmishes with the local defenders. At that time, Yao Ying was appointed the governor of Taiwan<sup>55</sup> and he successfully defended the security of the island. In 1842, based upon some former Chinese writings<sup>56</sup> and the statements of

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<sup>55</sup> The official title of Yao is named “Taiwan Bingbeidao” [台灣兵備道].

<sup>56</sup> In this article, Yao pointed out that his sources included *Kunyu tushuo* [Illustrated Explanation of the Entire World (1674)], a geography book written by Ferdinand Verbiest (also known as Nan

several British captives,<sup>57</sup> Yao wrote an article called “Yingjili ditushuo” [On the Map of Britain] and submitted it to Emperor Daoguang for reference. In this short article, Yao not only introduced the geographical location and overseas colonies of Britain, but also commented on British customs and fashions. It is from these comments we may obtain a glimpse of his general image of the British.

Except for admitting that the British were ingenious, good at making mechanical instruments and their country powerful, Yao barely had anything good to say about them. It is understandable if we take the immediate historical background of the article into consideration. When Yao wrote this article, the Chinese were at a war with the British and he was responsible for protecting Taiwan. In addition to this political factor, Yao also used the Chinese culture as a yardstick to measure the culture of the British and suggested that the latter was inferior to the former in many aspects. For instance, Yao remarked that the British throne was sometimes inherited by the female heirs of the royal family when there was no male one available and consequently the royal names were changed whenever the female heirs got married. To his surprise, the citizens still considered a new king with a different family name a legitimate heir to the kingdom. As this was completely different from the one practiced in China, Yao regarded it as an uncivilized custom.<sup>58</sup>

As stated earlier, it was nearly impossible for the Chinese to distinguish the Portuguese or the Dutch from the British by their features or physiques. Hence, when Chinese authors described the British, they tended to borrowed terms which

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Huairan, 1623-1688), *Haiguo wenjian lu* [Information about Overseas Countries (1730)], a travel account written by Chen Lunjiong and *Ming shi* [History of Ming Dynasty (1739)].

<sup>57</sup> In March 1842, a British schooner named *The Ann* hit submerged rocks en route from Zhoushan to Macao and then drifted to Taiwan. There were 57 people on board and 49 of them were captured by the Chinese, including the captain F. A. Denham. Yao wrote a report to the emperor and exaggerated the result of the battle. See Li Yongyu, “Yapian zhanzheng qijian geqian Taiwan yingchuan zingzhi kao” [A Study of the Aground British Ships in Taiwan during the Opium Wars], *Lishi Yanjiu* 2 (2003): 182.

<sup>58</sup> The original text is “國俗王死無子，則傳位於女。其女有子，俟女死後立之，實已數易其姓，而國人猶以爲其王之後，足見夷俗之陋。”



were used to describe the earlier-arrived Portuguese and the Dutch to describe the British. As a result, the Europeans in southeastern China were generally depicted by the Chinese as people having blue eyes, large noses, red hair, white skin and were indiscriminately called *Hongmao* [紅毛, the red-haired], *Hongyi* [紅夷, red foreigner], *Hongmaogui* [紅毛鬼, red-haired ghosts], *Hongmaofan* [紅毛蕃, red-haired foreigners], or sometimes *Baiyi* [白夷, white foreigners].<sup>59</sup> However, some authors associated the physiognomic characteristics of the foreigners with those of animals.<sup>60</sup> For instance, the blue eyes of the Europeans were often compared to those of a cat, while their mouth to the beak of an eagle or a warbler.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes the exotic visage of a foreigner was even compared to that of a ghost.<sup>62</sup>

Yao regarded the visages of the British as hideous and ugly [蠱爾醜夷], described their characters as greedy [無厭之求], crafty and deceitful [狡詐], unpredictable [夷情反覆], wild and unruly [桀驁] and directly called them man-eating spirits [魑魅], who were always meek towards the brutal and brutal

<sup>59</sup> The people that Europeans recruited from Africa, India, Malacca, and Singapore were, however, generally called *Heigui* or *Wugui* [black ghost].

<sup>60</sup> One of the best examples to illustrate how Chinese authors dehumanized outlanders was probably the mythology called *Shan Hai Jing* [Classic of Mountains and Seas], finished around 2000 years ago. In this bizarre book, many foreign people were depicted as synthesizers of human shapes and animal characteristics. It therefore implied that the outlanders were probably less humanized than the Chinese. For examples of illustrations, see Ma Changyi, *Guben Shan Hai Jing tushuo* [An Ancient Version of *Classic of Mountain and Seas* with Illustrations and Notes] Jinan: Shandong huabao, 2001.

<sup>61</sup> Chen Renxi used the phrase “ying zui mao yan” [鶯嘴貓眼, warbler beak and cat eyes] to describe the aquiline mouth and blue eyes of the Portuguese in his *Huangmin shifalu* [A Political Encyclopedia of the Ming Dynasty, 160], while in *Ming shi* [History of the Ming Dynasty] (1739), the exotic features of the Portuguese were described as “mao jing ying zui” [貓睛鷹嘴, cat eyes and eagle beak]. See Zhang Xinglang and Zhu Jieqing eds., *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* [A Collection of East-West Communications], vol. 1. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2003) 446, 448.

<sup>62</sup> In *Yangcheng guchao* [Ancient Banknotes of Yangcheng (Canton)], a posthumous work by Chou Juchuan and published by his friend Wen Runeng in 1806, the author noted that the eyes of the foreigners were dark green, their hair yellow, and their faces dark, which made one feel like facing a man-eating spirit [番人、眼皆碧綠，髮黃而面黧、見之驚猶魑魅]. Elsewhere in the same article Chou also noted that the red-haired ghosts were tall and red-haired, their orbits deep, their eyes blue, and their visages hideous and terrifying [紅毛鬼者長身赤髮，深目藍睛，勢尤猙獰可畏]. These biased descriptions of the visages of the foreigners illustrate the local Chinese's antipathy and fear towards European sailors. See Zhang Xinglang and Zhu Jieqing eds., *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* [A Collection of East-West Communications] vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2003) 507-08.

towards the meek [畏強欺弱].<sup>63</sup> There is scarcely anything positive attributed to the British in his writings.

To sum up, Yao's attitude towards the British was contemptuous and his images of them mostly negative. It is probably because his article was included in one of his reports to the emperor<sup>64</sup> and he had to make his opinion accord with that of the conservative intellectuals at court. He did not challenge the established unfavourable images of the British of that time. His works therefore helped to prolong the life of some negative images of the British in Chinese literary discourse. As a whole, Yao's works bear a distinctive mark of the "historical spirit" of that time. Just like the majority of his contemporary Chinese intellectuals, whose patriotism often led them to think favourably of themselves and negatively of others, Yao also subscribed to the mainstream conservative ideology and criticised the British maliciously.

#### IV. Summary

These narratives show that when the military conflict between China and Britain went from bad to worse in the late 1830s, the Chinese literati, partly due to their patriotism and partly conditioned by early negative images of the British merchants, started to condemn the British and present them as an evil and inhumane people. Some cliché like "as unpredictable as the sheep and the dogs" [犬羊之性無常] and "as greedy as the foxes and the wolves" [豺狼成性] were regularly used by writers to describe the British in all kinds of writings. Animals like pigs [豬],

<sup>63</sup> For examples of Yao's vilification of the British visages and characters, see Yao Ying, *Zhongfutang xuanji* [The Anthology of Zhongfutang] (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1960) 72, 85, 108, 109, 123, 138, 139, 140.

<sup>64</sup> The text was enclosed with Yao's "Fangyi zoushu" [A Memorial about Guarding against the Foreigners], which he submitted to Emperor Daoguang in July, 1842. See Ding Rijian, ed., *Zhi tai bi gao lu* [An Indispensable Collection of Taiwan Administration] (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1959) 202-06.

mice [鼠], owls [鴞], snakes[蛇], tiger [虎], whales [鯨], and spirits of dead people, *gui* [鬼, ghosts], were also repeatedly used to suggest that the British did not observe the same humanity and morality as the Chinese.<sup>65</sup> Originally, the word *gui* was simply used to highlight the exotic visages of the Europeans and the people they recruited from Africa and south-east Asia. It did not carry the connotation of fear or hatred as they did after the Opium War broke out.<sup>66</sup> However, as the commercial and military conflicts became more difficult for the Chinese to handle in the 1840s, a series of negative meanings were attributed to the word *gui*, which eventually become a collective name for all foreigners. The deviations of *gui* include phrases like *fan gui* (番鬼, foreign ghost), *yang gui* (洋鬼, overseas ghost), *yi gui* (夷鬼, foreign ghost), *xi gui* (西鬼, western ghost), *bai gui* (白鬼, white ghost), *gui zi* (鬼子, ghosts), and *gui bing* (鬼兵, ghost soldier). Like those animals that the Chinese literati used to associate with the British, the word *gui* and its deviations used after the outset of the Opium War also suggest that the Chinese literati did not consider the British an equal in the aspects of humanity and morality. Ye Shuxian suggested that the more abnormal a “cultural Other” is depicted, the more normal it counter-proves the “Self” to be. Likewise, the more frequently the “Other” is vilified, the more

<sup>65</sup> For examples see “Guangdong yimin chigao yingyi shuotie” [廣東義民斥告英夷說帖, Canton Voluntary Army’s Memorandum to Reprimand the British Barbarians] (1841) and Qian Jiang and He Dageng, “Quan yue yishi yimin gongxi” [全粵義士義民公檄, A Public Declaration Issued by All Righteous Soldiers and Citizens of Canton] (1842), both collected in A Ying’s *Yapian zhanzheng wenxueji*, vol. 3, 1172-75, 1236-39. In his short poem “Ti sheying qulang tu” [題射鷹驅狼圖, A Poem for the Painting Entitled Shooting Eagles and Driving off Wolves, 1851], which has only two hundred and eighty words, Chen Jiecan used as many as eighteen animals to describe the British. See A Ying, vol. 1, 234-35.

<sup>66</sup> Meng Hua cited two passages individually from *Yan pu zaji* [A Miscellaneous Collection of the Sun-exposed Eaves], by Zhao Yi (1727-1814), and *Zhuyeting zaji* [A Miscellaneous Collection of the Bamboo-leaf Pavilion], by Yao Yuanzhi (1776-1852), to illustrate that the terms *gui* [ghost] or *guizi* [devil] carried no fearful or hatred connotations at all when they were referred to the exotic visages of the foreigners in Canton before the Opium Wars, though both terms might have reflected the authors’ hierarchy of human races which regarded foreigners as inferior. See Meng Hua, “Zhongguo wenxue zhong yige taohuahua le de xifangren xingxiang—‘Yangguizhi qianxi’” [A Stereotyped Image of the Westerner in Chinese Literature—An Elementary Analysis of the Term ‘Foreign Devil’], *Zhongguo wenxue zhong de xifangren xingxiang* [Images of the Westerners in Chinese Literature] (Anhui: Anhui Jiaoyu, 2006) 14-16.

likely the “Self” appears to be superior and perfect. It is from this pattern of antithesis that imagology suggests that a mirage of the “Other” is indeed the opposite side of a mirage of the “Self.”<sup>67</sup> Hence, as the writers smeared the images of the British by associating their natures with those of animals and ghosts, they simultaneously suggested that the Chinese were more humane and rational.

Both culture and psychology played important roles in shaping Chinese images of the British. Dehumanized and demonized images of “the Other” helped Chinese writers to unilaterally announce the superiority of their own culture. Pageaux suggests that a stereotype tends to imply that there is a constant hierarchy and a genuine dichotomy which can be used to distinguish different cultures. As soon as a stereotype is brought up, it immediately creates a confrontation. Anything found incompatible with the stereotype will be excluded from this culture in order to ascertain the “truth” which is embedded in the stereotype rigidly.<sup>68</sup> Hence, the Chinese writers stereotyped the British as a people with certain animalities or simply as ghosts. In the dichotomy of the Chinese and the British, the former is mostly proclaimed as superior. In his study of European discourses of the “Other” Said observes that “All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them.”<sup>69</sup> So, the way that the Chinese literati used to control and represent the images of the British was to stereotype them. When they stereotyped images of the British, they often used popular clichés to repeat the prejudiced images of the British. On the one hand, the clichés reduced the numbers of images of the British; on the other hand, they also strengthened the negative images of the British by incorporating them into people’s

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<sup>67</sup> Ye Shuxian, “*Shan Hai King* yu ‘wenhua tazhe’ shenhua—xingxiangxue yu renleixue de fenxi” [*Shan Hai King* and the Mythology of “Cultural Others”—An Imagological and Anthropological Analysis], *Social Science Journal of Hainan University* 16.2 (1998): 61.

<sup>68</sup> See Pageaux, “Xingxiang” 160-61.

<sup>69</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 100.

daily language usages. Therefore, by way of reducing the number of the Chinese images of the British and then strengthening these images by making them parts of clichés, Chinese writers effectively controlled variations of images of the British in their own works.

## Chapter Six

### China as an “Other” in British Writings from the 1750s to the 1790s

#### I. Images of the Chinese in the works of Horace Walpole and an unknown contemporary

##### A. Walpole’s knowledge of China

When Sir William Chambers (1726-1796) published his *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* in 1757, Horace Walpole (also known as Horatio Walpole, 1717-97) anonymously published a well-received political pamphlet, in which a Chinese philosopher was figured as a bewildered visitor to criticize and ridicule contemporary British politics.<sup>1</sup> The title of the pamphlet is *A Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to his Friend Lien Chi at Peking* and it is believed that Walpole only took one and a half hours to finish this satirical piece.<sup>2</sup> The immediate popularity of this pamphlet can be easily recognized by the fact that five editions were exhausted in a fortnight.<sup>3</sup> The tremendous success of this work even enticed a response, *An Answer from Lien Chi, in Peking, to Xo Ho, the Chinese Philosopher in London, to Which is Annexed a Letter from Philo-Briton to Lien-Chi*, which was also published anonymously within one month after Walpole sent his pamphlet to press.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walpole did not sign his name to *A Letter from Xo Ho* when it was published in 1757, but he included this piece in his *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose*, published in the following year. Strangely enough, though the work impressed many reviewers in London and Paris and sold very well, no contemporary reviewer had ever attributed the pamphlet to Walpole. See Peter Sabor, ed., *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) 4, 27-28. Besides, in one letter to Sir Horace Mann, dated May 19, 1757, Walpole mentioned the Chinese letter in question and signed the letter to Mann with a pseudonym, Xo Ho. Elsewhere in a letter to Lady Ossory, dated July 6, 1779, Walpole remarked that “I believe I am really Xo Hoho, a Chinese that comprehends nothing he sees or hears.” See Horace Walpole, *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, eds. W. S. Lewis, vol. 21 (London: Oxford UP, 1960) 91-92, vol. 33 (1965) 107.

<sup>2</sup> See Dorothy Margaret Stuart, *Horace Walpole* (London: Macmillan, 1927) 139.

<sup>3</sup> See Horace Walpole, *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose* (Twickenham, 1758) 191, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 12 Oct. 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>4</sup> Walpole finished his *A Letter from Xo Ho* on May 12, 1757, and sent it to the press the next day, while the date of finishing *An Answer from Lien Chi* was suggested to be June 7, 1757, by the anonymous author himself. See Walpole, *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose*, 191 and *An Answer*

Before proceeding to discuss the images of the Chinese in Walpole's writings, it seems interesting to look into Walpole's possible sources of the Chinese customs and fashions. Dorothy Margaret Stuart suggested that ever since Walpole entered Cambridge in 1735 he started to read extensively about Chinese customs, history, and traditions.<sup>5</sup> In his copious correspondence we find that by the time he published his *A Letter from Xo Ho* he had commented on the Chinese and their country mentioned in works like Mandeville's *Travels*,<sup>6</sup> Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (1735)<sup>7</sup> and Richard Walter's account of George Anson's travel, *A Voyage of round the World, in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV* (1748).<sup>8</sup> From 1757 to his death in 1797, he also told his friends his own thoughts

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from Lien Chi, in Peking, to Xo Ho, the Chinese Philosopher in London, to Which is Annexed A Letter from Philo-Briton to Lien-Chi (London, 1757) 10, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 12 Oct. 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>. As reviewers praised Walpole's *A Letter from Xo Ho* for its wit and novelty, the response seemed to attract far less interest from the reviewers. One reviewer remarked that "The *Letter* that gave rise to this article had wit and novelty to recommend it; but the *Answer* can boast neither; --nor any other kind of merit, that we can perceive." See rev. of *An Answer from Lien Chi, in Peking, to Xo Ho, the Chinese Philosopher in London, to Which is Annexed A Letter from Philo-Briton to Lien-Chi*, *The Monthly Review*, July 1757: 564.

<sup>5</sup> Walpole's interest in Chinese culture can also be observed in the Chinese name of his goldfish pond at Strawberry Hill, "Poyang." See Stuart 16, 139 and Ros Ballaster, ed., *Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 127-28. Poyang Lake, located in Jiangxi Province, is the largest fresh water lake in China.

<sup>6</sup> Walpole regards Mandeville his countryman and repudiates him for not naming China correctly. See Walpole's letter to Lady Craven, dated January 2, 1787, in Walpole's *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 42 (1980) 183.

<sup>7</sup> See Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 40 (1980) 17. Walpole received a copy of Du Halde's book from Lord Hervey in 1735, during his first year at Cambridge. See David Porter, "From Chinese to Goth: Walpole and the Gothic Repudiation of Chinoiserie," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23.1 (1999): 50.

<sup>8</sup> In one letter to George Montagu Esq. dated 18 May 1748, Walpole told Montague that he considered the stories of Anson's voyages "very silly and contradictory." He further compared the work to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). See Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9 (1941) 55. Around three years later, on June 17, 1751, Walpole noted in his *Memories of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George the Second* (published posthumously in 1822) that "Lord Anson was reserved and proud, and so ignorant of the world, that Sir Charles Williams said he had been round it, but never in it." See Horace Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 7 (1822, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977) 169. Elsewhere in one letter to the Earl of Strafford, dated July 5, 1757, Walpole questioned the authenticity of Anson's story, in which the admiral claimed that he has seriously punished China with one man-of-war for an unpleasant treatment in 1742. See Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35 (1973) 284. These three references to George Anson and his traveling accounts imply that Walpole seems to be quite suspicious about the reliability of Anson's exaggerated stories.

about the Chinese civilization, which he related to works like Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764)<sup>9</sup> and William Chambers' forementioned work and *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772).<sup>10</sup> In his personal library, we also find Cornelius de Pauw's *Recherches philosophiques sur les Égyptiens et les Chinois* (1773)<sup>11</sup> and Isidore Stanislaus Helman's *Faits Mémorables des Empereurs de la Chine* (1788). These references to China and the Chinese illustrate that Walpole had a constant predilection for things Chinese in his readings. It was likely the impressions of the Chinese absorbed from these works, mixing with his own imagination, that ultimately brought out Walpole's personal images of the Chinese in his writings.

### B. Images of the Chinese in *A Letter from Xo Ho*

In *A Letter from Xo Ho*, Walpole, speaking in the persona of a Chinese philosopher Xo Ho, satirizes the political injustice and social unrest of contemporary British society, with an emphasis on unjust political rewards and punishments, as exemplified in the case of the execution of Admiral John Byng (1704-1757). Designating a foreigner to comment on the social evils of a country, Walpole followed in the steps of Giovanni Paolo Marana (*The Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 1684), Charles de Secondat Montesquieu (*Letters Persanes*, 1721),<sup>12</sup> George Lord

<sup>9</sup> In a letter to Lady Ossory, dated July 12, 1780, Walpole referred to a section entitled "Entretien avec un Chinois" in the entry of "Gloire, Glorieux" of Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique, Portatif* (1765?). In this section Voltaire noted a story, which happened in 1723, that a Chinese walks into a European bookseller's shop and they are mutually surprised to know how ignorant they are about the great names in different regions. See Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 33 (1965) 206-07.

<sup>10</sup> See Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 28 (1955) 28-29.

<sup>11</sup> In this work, architectures, paintings and sculptures of the Egyptians and the Chinese were closely compared and evaluated by Pauw. He concluded his research by suggesting both Chinese and Egyptians have failed to make significant improvement in painting and sculpture. See Lars E. Troide, ed., *Horace Walpole's Miscellany, 1786-1795* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978) 49n.

<sup>12</sup> Both Stuart and Qian Zhongshu suggested that Walpole was clearly indebted to Montesquieu for the device of writing pseudo-letters, see Stuart, *Horace Walpole*, 139, Qian, "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century," *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Adrian Hsia (Hong Kong: Chinese UP, 1998) 162.



Lyttelton (*Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan*, 1735), and Marquis D'Argens (*Lettres Chinoises, ou, Correspondance Philosophique, Historique & Critique, entre un Chinois Voyageur & ses Correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse & au Japon*, 1739-40). This device was later adopted by Oliver Goldsmith for his *The Citizen of the World* (1762), where he shows his indebtedness to Walpole by borrowing the name Lien Chi from *A Letter from Xo Ho* for his Chinese philosopher.<sup>13</sup>

Kenneth W. Gross suggested that *A Letter from Xo Ho* was primarily designated to attack the muddling powers of the King, ministers and Parliament during the Seven Years War, epitomized by the debatable execution of Admiral John Byng, who was put to death at Portsmouth on March 14, 1757.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of *A Letter from Xo Ho*, the Chinese philosopher tells his friend Lien Chi in China that "this [British] people are incomprehensible; not only [do] they differ from us; they are unlike the rest of the Western World," adding that "Reason in *China* is not Reason in *England*" and "Everything here is reversed."<sup>15</sup> To give Lien Chi some examples of British citizens' eccentricity, Xo Ho recounts how an Englishman may love or hate his king once or twice a season for no specific

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<sup>13</sup> See Arthur Friedman's note, *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, by Oliver Goldsmith, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 17 and Stuart, *Horace Walpole* 139. Besides, in the preface to *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785) Walpole mentioned his "universal citizenship" for designing the book for readers of all nations. The idea of "universal citizenship" might also be borrowed by Goldsmith to name his work *The Citizen of the World*.

<sup>14</sup> See Kenneth W. Gross, "Introduction," *Hieroglyphic Tales* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1982) v. Walpole's former image of Byng is by no means favourable and, like most disappointed patriots of the time, thinks it righteous to blame Byng for being defeated by the French fleet and losing Minorca and a British regiment on the island at the beginning of the trial against Byng, starting in early 1757. However, after he reads the defendant's self-defensive pamphlet, he changes his view and considers him a scapegoat of an indignant nation. Being temporarily out of Parliament during Byng's trial, he aggressively uses his personal connections in an attempt to rescue Byng from being executed. Nevertheless, his intense endeavour fails to change the decision of the court-martial and Byng is executed a few weeks later. For more information about Walpole's opinion about Byng's trial and his effort in saving the admiral's life, see Walpole, *Horace Walpole: The Works*, vol. 3 [Memoires of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George the Second], 51-2, 54-70, 83-4, 116-40, 144-91; R. W. Ketton-Cremer, *Horace Walpole: A Biography* (London: Duckworth, 1940) 224-27.

<sup>15</sup> Walpole, *A Letter from Xo Ho* (London, 1757) 1, 2, 5, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 15 Oct. 2006 <<http://galenct.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

reasons, how Parliament is currently working without ministers and how ministers, who may also be liable for the loss of Minorca, may have the impudence to run for election again and let Byng alone be blamed for an unredeemable defeat. It is in such a mixture of bitter humour and poignant criticism that Walpole, through his Chinese mouthpiece, expresses his anger and disappointment about the political milieu of the time.

As a whole, the Chinese philosopher hardly bears any characteristic that can clearly differentiate him from peoples of other ethnic origins. Of this phenomenon, Qian observes that “the letter is from the beginning to the end a bitter indictment of the ‘incomprehensible’ British character, bristling with topical allusions. Apart from one innovation of Confucius, it has no local colour whatever.”<sup>16</sup> Hence, if we take Walpole’s extensive readings about Chinese customs and fashions into account, it seems unlikely that he has any interest in endowing his Chinese characters with any genuine characteristics.

Walpole does not clearly point out in what way the Chinese are superior to the British in the satire, nor does he suggest the British should take the Chinese as a model to improve themselves. He simply suggests that, from the perspective of a Chinese philosopher, the British seem to behave illogical and irrational in most aspects.

### **C. Images of the Chinese in *An Answer from Lien Chi* and *A Letter from Philo-Briton to Lien Chi***

In *An Answer from Lien Chi*, Xo Ho’s identity as a Chinese philosopher is discredited by his friend Lien Chi, who doubts both Xo Ho’s scholarly attainments and his capacity to understand British society, under the premise that the Chinese

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<sup>16</sup> Qian, “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century” 162.

philosopher knows little about English language and manners. Lien Chi even suspiciously suggests that Xo Ho might come from a French lineage, a factor that may account for his bias against the British, who are nevertheless esteemed by the Chinese. Suggesting Xo Ho's story is too "dark" to be true, Lien Chi repeatedly claims that Xo Ho does not sound like a Chinese and the latter's intention to defame the British seems to be no less as incomprehensible as the behaviour of the accused foreigners.<sup>17</sup> With reference to Xo Ho's vilifying comment on the British society, Lien Chi skeptically remarks that:

Moreover, in the Opening of this last Epistle, thou dealest in most dark and intricate Sentences, which infinitely surpass our explaining or unraveling, and pratest we know not what of Factions, Caprices, and settled Ideas of this and that Nation; in all which there is nothing settled, marked or determined; thou concludest at last with an admirable Deduction from these uncontestable Principles, that the *English* are certainly an incomprehensible People! Were they indeed, what thou here alledgedst, thou wouldst in that respect much resemble them: for thou art amazingly incomprehensible.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, at the end of the letter Lien Chi proclaims that if Xo Ho should continue to walk in "the paths of obscurity," all his Chinese associates might henceforth be unwilling to communicate with him ever again. Hence, this response from Lien Chi is fundamentally a counterargument which aims to defy Xo Ho's accusation against the British government. It sheds the light of Walpole's satire which suggests that neither the Chinese nor the British won his favour eventually.

In addition to *An Answer from Lien Chi*, the anonymous writer also annexes a letter from a British philosopher to Lien Chi, dated 7 June 1757, to support the

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<sup>17</sup> See *An Answer from Lien Chi* (London: 1757) 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> *An Answer from Lien Chi* (London: 1757) 4.

latter's critique against Xo Ho's vilification of the British. At the beginning of the letter the British philosopher tells Lien Chi that the Chinese are generally considered as "curious in their Enquiries, penetrative in their Observations, and sagacious in the Judgments."<sup>19</sup> He vindicates his own country and discredits the Chinese in case his readers might believe Xo Ho's unfavourable account about the British. Like Lien Chi, the British Philosopher also implies that Xo Ho's prejudice against the British could be a result of his French extraction and consequently questions his motive for defaming the British. The only thing that the British philosopher agrees with Xo Ho is the latter's honesty in confessing that he knows little about the language and manners of the British.

In his letter the British philosopher rejects Xo Ho's accusations one by one and suggests that all the cases perplexing Xo Ho are by no means usual practices of the British, but particular cases. On the case of executing Byng, the British philosopher considers the defendant a delinquent admiral and defends the judges' decision:

Xo Ho says, *acquitted, condemn'd, and put to Death*. This is all Fallacy! He deceives you notoriously, and reflects most injuriously on the Lenity of the Judges, who after the most fair and impartial Trial, blending Mercy with Justice, while they acquitted him of one Part of his Charge, pronounced him guilty of another.<sup>20</sup>

However, there is an ironic connotation embedded in this passage because the philosopher is actually accusing the judges for playing with the law to convict Byng one way or another. The author of this response therefore shares a similar opinion with Walpole and suggests that the punishment upon Byng is unfair.

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<sup>19</sup> *An Answer from Lien Chi* (London: 1757) 5.

<sup>20</sup> *An Answer from Lien Chi* (London: 1757) 8.

As for this anonymous writer's attempt at adding local colour to his Chinese characters, it seems that the author has paid more attention to characterize the Chinese personae than what Walpole has done in *A Letter from Xo Ho*. The anonymous writer indicates that the Chinese regard their emperors as "Sons of heaven," they always greet their emperors by prostrations and a Chinese emperor is usually considered a father of the country. In addition, the anonymous author also observes that it is "Tien," the ultimate deity in Chinese theology, rather than an anglicized "God," that the Chinese ask for spiritual guidance whenever they are bewildered.

The anonymous writer attributes a number of favourable qualities to the Chinese, he praises them as "curious in Enquiries, penetrative in their Observations, and sagacious in their Judgments," and "ever cordially interested in the Cause of Truth."<sup>21</sup> However, with regard to Xo Ho's accusation that the British king retires into his palace at Kensington without appointing a ministry, the British philosopher argues that the king is not an idle ruler because he is still accessible to his subjects thence. By contrast, when the emperor of China moves to his pleasure-house near Peking, he is completely retired from his business. This comparison consequently implies that the British king is more responsible than the emperor of China. So, the general image of the Chinese public depicted by the anonymous writer is much better than his image of the Chinese emperor. The Chinese public is pictured as a people having sharp observations and good judgments. They not only have a thirst for knowledge, but also are keen to find the cause of truth. However, their emperor seems to be an irresponsible one, who is likely to value his own joy more than the benefits of his subjects. In the works of both writers, we found that both of them have camouflaged themselves with Chinese masks to criticise contemporary British

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<sup>21</sup> *An Answer from Lien Chi* (London: 1757) 5, 10.

politics and society from the perspective of an outsider.

#### D. Eccentric and unfavourable images of the Chinese in *Hieroglyphic Tales*

In addition to his *A Letter from Xo Ho*, another work which can be applied to examine Walpole's image of the Chinese is an oriental tale called "Mi Li: A Chinese Fairy Tale," one of the five stories collected in his first edition of *Hieroglyphic Tales*,<sup>22</sup> which was finished in 1772 and only six copies were produced by the author's own Strawberry Hill Press at Twickenham in 1785.<sup>23</sup> In terms of the peculiar style of this work, Walpole suggested that his *Hieroglyphic Tales* would challenge conventions of stories and novels as well as test the limitation of his own wild imagination. In his postscript he remarks that his whimsical stories "deserve at most to be considered as an attempt to vary the stale and beaten class of stories and novels, which, though works of invention, are almost always devoid of imagination."<sup>24</sup> To further specify his conception of the shortage of imagination in literature, Walpole used a contemporary French periodical, *Bibliothèque des Romans*,<sup>25</sup> which was dedicated to collecting French translations of foreign works,

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<sup>22</sup> The other four stories collected in the first edition are "A New Arabian Night's Entertainment," "The King and his Three Daughters," "The Dice Box: A Fairy Tale," "The Peach in Brandy: A Milesian Tale." Another tale, "A True Love Story," was added to *Hieroglyphic Tales* in the posthumous edition *The Works of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford* in 1798, hereafter cited as *The Works*. In 1967, A. Dayle Wallace published a manuscript of another tale, in the possession of W. S. Lewis, "The Bird's Nest," which was originally intended to be the fifth tale of *Hieroglyphic Tales*, but discarded by Walpole for some unknown reason. See Stuart, *Horace Walpole*, 191; Wallace, "Two Unpublished Fairy Tales by Horace Walpole," *Horace Walpole: Writer, Politician, and Connoisseur*, ed. Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 241-53.

<sup>23</sup> This collection was the smallest edition of Walpole's works. Originally, it is designed partly to entertain Lady Ailesbury's niece Caroline Campbell and partly to amuse Walpole himself, who experienced an unsettled life after his retirement from the parliament in 1768. See Ketton-Cremer 317-18; Gross iii-iv.

<sup>24</sup> Walpole, *Hieroglyphic Tales* 51.

<sup>25</sup> *Bibliothèque des Romans* is the spine title of *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans, ouvrage périodique : dans lequel on donne l'analyse raisonnée des Romans anciens & modernes, François, ou traduits dans notre langue; avec des anecdotes & des notices historiques & critiques concernant les auteurs, ou leurs ouvrages; ainsi que les mœurs, les usages du temps, les circonstances particulières & relatives, & les personnages connus, déguisez ou, emblématiques*, which collects French translations from English, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Spanish and a number of oriental languages, was published in Paris between 1775 and 1789.

as an example and argued that

It would scarcely be credited, were it not evident from the *Bibliothèque des Romans*, which contains the fictitious adventures that have been written in all ages and all countries, that there should have been so little fancy, so little variety, and so little novelty, in writings in which the imagination is fettered by no rules, and by no obligation of speaking truth.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, it is the limits of imagination as well as the variety and novelty of literature that Walpole wished to challenge in his *Hieroglyphic Tales*. Indeed, evidence of his accomplishment in these aspects can be found throughout the work. The following short extract from his preface seems to be a just testimony of his wild fancy and imagination.

The Hieroglyphic Tales were undoubtedly written a little before the creation of the world, and have ever since been preserved, by oral tradition, in the mountains of Crampraggiri, an uninhabited island, not yet discovered. Of these few facts we could have the most authentic attestations of several clergymen, who remember to have heard them repeated by old men long before they, the said clergymen, were born.<sup>27</sup>

Of the bizarre style of this work, Stuart remarked that “The whimsicality of these tales is such that the intended parable or satire sometimes becomes a little difficult of detection. The design has the inconsequence, the quaintness, the gaiety of colour and the lack of perspective, of a scene painted on a piece of Chinese porcelain.”<sup>28</sup> Gross, furthermore, specifically pointed out that:

Walpole’s brief narratives tend to liberate the fantasies of satire from the

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<sup>26</sup> Walpole, *Hieroglyphic Tales* 51.

<sup>27</sup> Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 322-23.

<sup>28</sup> Stuart 191.

bondage of ideas. That is to say, his tales make use of the exaggerated, ironic fictions of satire as much as the more self-consistent magical devices of fairy tales, but their bizarre, mannerist surface seem continually to deny the possibility of a concealed intellectual skeleton. Despite a wealth of literary and historical allusion, and many *moments* of sharp, ironic criticism, Walpole's hieroglyphics do not invite us to read them as ciphers of an integrated satiric argument.<sup>29</sup>

It is in such an eccentric vein that Walpole mixed facts and fantasy to compose the Chinese fairy tale of Mi Li and other stories.

Though originally written to entertain an eight-year old reader, the young Miss Caroline Campbell who figured in the tale,<sup>30</sup> it seems that Walpole did not give up the chance to ridicule members of the royal family again. In a review of October, 1798, Charles Burney (1726-1814) indicated that "The late king [George III], the Prince of Wales [George Augustus Frederick, later George IV], and his consort [Caroline of Brunswick], (Brunswickers,) are all here typified."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, though the protagonist is a Chinese prince, he is more likely an embodiment of a British prince. Again, as in *A Letter from Xo Ho*, Walpole adopted a Chinese persona to comment on the folly and knavery observed in the British, this time members of the royal family in particular.<sup>32</sup>

Except for the follies of the royal family and the courtiers, another thing Walpole wishes to ridicule in "Mi Li" is the Chinoiserie vogue that infatuated people of Britain at that time. As Ballaster indicated, Walpole seems to have turned against the Chinoiserie garden style after Sir William Chamber published his *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* in 1772 and what he suggests to counter the

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<sup>29</sup> Gross, introduction iv-v.

<sup>30</sup> See Sabor 152; Gillian Avery, "Written for Children: Two Eighteenth-Century English Fairy Tales," *Murvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 16.2 (2002): 143.

<sup>31</sup> See Sabor 154-155.

<sup>32</sup> See Gross v.



fashionable Chinoiserie layout of gardening is arguably an equally whimsical style—the Gothic style.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the detailed description of the English garden in the tale, which is finished in a grotesque oriental design and ornaments, reveals Walpole's antipathy to the Chinoiserie style in English gardening. Chinoiserie might possibly have foreshadowed his overall impression of the Chinese. What images have been attributed to the Chinese by the author then? In this fairy tale Mi Li was told of an oracle by his godmother, a fairy who was famous for using a tea cup to tell fortunes, that he would be the most unhappy man alive unless he married a princess whose name was the same with her father's dominions.<sup>34</sup> After he knew this oracle, Mi Li immediately sent for his governor for advice, who turned out to be both deaf and dumb. Being wrongly circulated among the courtiers and people in Peking, Tartary and Muscovy, the new version of the oracle became that the prince wanted to marry a princess who had a name identical to that of her father.

On Mi Li's new oracle Walpole humorously elaborated that:

As the Chinese have not the blessing (for aught I know) of having family surnames as we have, and as what would be their Christian-names, if they were so happy as to be Christians, are quite different for men and women, the Chinese, who think that must be a rule all over the world because it is theirs, decided that there could not exist upon the square face of the earth a woman whose name was the same as her father's. They repeated this so often, and with so much deference and so much obstinacy, that the prince, totally forgetting the original oracle, believed that he wanted to know who the woman was who had the same name as her father.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ballaster 128. For a more extensive discussion of Walpole's early enthusiasm for things Chinese and his later conversion from Chinoiserie taste to Gothic style in architectures and gardening, see Porter 46-58.

<sup>34</sup> See Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 342.

<sup>35</sup> Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 343.

In this passage, Walpole depicts the Chinese as both arrogant and ignorant as to believe that their rules being practiced by all the other people in the world as well. Similar ignorance can also be discovered in the old king and his predecessors, who thought it only took a few days to see the world and consequently never ventured to leave their palaces to explore the world outside till they lost the chance.<sup>36</sup>

Before Mi Li embarks on a British battleship to search for his bride overseas, an honest Irishman named Tom O'Bull, with the assistant of his interpreter Mr. James Hall from England, tells the prince that a Miss Bob Oliver of Sligo, Ireland, was christened after her father, Bob Oliver. Yet, when the prince arrives in Dublin he finds that Miss Oliver is already married and has left Ireland. Upon this disappointing result, Walpole sarcastically notes that "He [O'Bull] would have been chopped as small as rice, for it is death in China to mislead the heir of the crown through ignorance. To do it knowingly is no crime, any more than in other countries."<sup>37</sup> Walpole seems to imply here that the Chinese are irrational and their laws disordered.

Disappointed to discover Miss Oliver is already married, Mi Li has an unusual dream, which he believes to be another oracle. In this dream Mi Li foresees that

*[H]e would find his destined spouse, whose father had lost the dominions which never had been his dominions, in a place where there*

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<sup>36</sup> See Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 343. Walpole's depiction of the Chinese emperors as ignorant monarchs, who display poor knowledge about foreign lands, might originate from his early readings about the Chinese's poor achievements in astrology and geology, a fact frequently noted by European visitors of China in their correspondences or works. Two years after he published *Hieroglyphic Tales*, Walpole mentioned his opinion about the progress of the Chinese arts. He said "Many have thought the Egyptians derived from the Chinese, & others vice versa. In one respect the Two Nations had great resemblance: Each very early made great progress in the Arts of Sculpture, Painting & Architecture; but then stopped short, & never made the least improvement afterwards." Similar idea about the stagnancy of Chinese civilization can also be found in a letter to William Robertson, a historian, dated June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1791, in which Walpole said "I have long thought, that nations who made early progress in science and arts, and stopped short, are like forward children who have quick parts at five years old, were advanced no farther at fifteen, and at thirty are blockheads. Such have been the Egyptians and the Chinese . . . ." See Troide 48-49; Walpole, *Horace Correspondence*, vol. 15, 211.

<sup>37</sup> Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 344.

*was a bridge over no water, a tomb where nobody ever was buried nor ever would be buried, ruins that were more than they had ever been, a subterranean passage in which there were dogs with eyes of rubies and emeralds, and a more beautiful menagerie of Chinese pheasants than any in his father's extensive gardens.*<sup>38</sup>

He is later informed that someone called Mr Banks in England, who was traveling around the world to search for something he did not know, might be a better conductor for his second journey. On his way to find Banks in Oxford, Mi Li meanders into General Conway's house and sees all the strange things in his dream there in astonishment. When he is led to meet General Conway and his wife Lady Ailesbury, accompanied by their young niece Caroline Campbell, he immediately seizes the hands of Miss Campbell and cries "Who she? Who she?"<sup>39</sup> General Conway informs Mi Li that the one he was looking for is precisely Miss Caroline Campbell, daughter of Lord William Campbell, the late governor of Carolina. In the end, Mi Li fulfills the second oracle by marrying her.

As a whole, though Walpole intends to satirize the domestic monarch and a number of his family members in his oriental fairy tale, it also, to certain degree, reveals his personal images of the Chinese. The images he attributes to the Chinese in this tale are mostly negative. They are arrogant, ignorant, irrational and superstitious.<sup>40</sup> The law of China is also ridiculed as both disordered and illogical.

### E. Summary

There are both positive and negative images of the Chinese in Walpole's works.

<sup>38</sup> Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 344-45. The text is originally italicized.

<sup>39</sup> Walpole, *The Works*, vol. 4, 347. Of Mi Li's strange utterance, Qian noticed that Mi Li is the first Chinese character in English literature who has difficulty in making himself understood in English. See Qian, "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century" 163.

<sup>40</sup> In a note, Ge Guilu, without giving any example, suggested that the images attributed to the Chinese in this tale included superstitious, punctilious to manners, indolent, inflexible to conventions and incomprehensible. See Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 211.

In his *A Letter from Xo Ho*, the Chinese philosopher tells his friend Lien Chi that the conduct of the monarch and his ministers are completely incomprehensible to him. He observes the king as extravagant and irresponsible as the latter enjoys indulging himself, but leaves his subjects living in want. The king even retreats to his summer house without appointing ministers to run the government. As for the politicians and ministers of Britain, Xo Ho observed dishonesty and irresponsibility in them. He suggested that they are liable to tell lies because people like to hear something different from them every single day. Some ministers who are also accountable for Admiral Byng's defeat were elected ministers again after they put Byng to death. Declaring the politics and institutions of Britain confusing and illogical, Xo Ho indirectly implies that, by comparison, the Chinese emperor and his mandarins are more moderate, responsible and truthful and China to be a better-governed country, though not necessarily a utopia. Hence, it seems reasonable to say that Walpole's early image of China and the Chinese is mostly neutral or positive.

Nevertheless, in "Mi Li" and later correspondence, we see that the author gradually modifies his early impressions of the Chinese and tends to attribute negative descriptions to them. In the story of "Mi Li," the Chinese are depicted as a people of arrogance, foolishness, ignorance and superstition; whereas in his later correspondence, the civilisation of the Chinese is often paired with that of the Egyptians and dismissed as backward and rigid.

Walpole employs the Chinese characters either as his mouthpiece to ridicule the contemporary political chaos and injustice, as in the case of Xo Ho, or as an embodiment of the real target that he wishes to criticise, as in the story of "Mi Li." In both works, Walpole's main purpose is to ridicule contemporary British society, in where he finds cases of incomprehensibility, injustice, irrationality and

irresponsibility. The Chinese persona he adopts only serves as a mask to conceal his bitter sneers.<sup>41</sup>

## II. Images of China and the Chinese in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* and other works

### A. Goldsmith's knowledge of China and the Chinese

In early January of 1760 John Newbery invited Oliver Goldsmith to write a series of short articles for his *Public Ledger*, a new twice-weekly periodical.

Goldsmith accepted the offer and decided to use correspondence as the format. For his protagonist, he created a Chinese philosopher named Lien Chi Altangi as a critical observer,<sup>42</sup> who came to Britain to increase his knowledge of the world.

This device of having a foreigner comment on a country and her inhabitants was a literary fashion of the time and proved attractive.<sup>43</sup> But why did Goldsmith favour a Chinese in particular, instead of a Frenchman or a Spaniard, as his mouthpiece to comment on his fellow countrymen? Rosalind Vallance suggests that it was probably due to the author's sensitivity to the social vogue of his time as there was a craze for chinoiserie<sup>44</sup> in Britain then,<sup>45</sup> which Goldsmith liked to ridicule.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908, London: Frank Cass, 1966) 187-88.

<sup>42</sup> Goldsmith probably borrowed the name Lien Chi from Horace Walpole's "A Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London to his Friend Lien Chi, at Peking" [also known as *A letter from Xo Ho*], published on May 12, 1757. See Friedman's note, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 17 and Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 210.

<sup>43</sup> This fashion of reporting on a country by a foreigner originates from Giovanni Paolo Marana's *The Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, published in 1684 [Rendered into English from 1687 to 1694]. In the eighteenth century, Charles de Secondat Montesquieu's *Letters Persanes* (1721), George Lord Lyttelton's *Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan* (1735), and Marquis D'Argens' *Lettres Chinoises, ou, Correspondance Philosophique, Historique & Critique, entre un Chinois Voyageur & ses Correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse & au Japon* (1739-40) [Englished in 1741 as *Chinese Letters: Being a Philosophical, Historical, and Critical Correspondence between a Chinese Traveller at Paris, and his Countrymen in China, Muscovy, Persia and Japan*] further matured the narrative. See Rosalind Vallance, introduction, *The Citizen of the World*, by Oliver Goldsmith (London: Folio Society, 1969) 10; David Parker, "Diaspora, Dissidence and the Dangers of Cosmopolitanism," *Asian Studies Review* 27.2 (2003): 157.

<sup>44</sup> Oliver Impey defines "chinoiserie" as "European idea of what oriental things were like, or ought to be like." As the term "oriental" might be used to refer to any place from Persia to Japan, it therefore results in a wide variety of chinoiserie styles. "Chinoiserie," he further explains, "is thus the European manifestation of mixtures of various oriental styles with which are mixed rococo, baroque, gothick (sic.) or any other European style it was felt was suitable. But the oriental origins of the

David Parker, nevertheless, suggests that

[T]ime after time in Western discourse Chinese culture becomes the far distant horizon for self-reflection, and a proving ground for the extent to which sentiments and sensibilities can be shared, transposed or mutually comprehended. From food to philosophy, from geomancy to human rights, China is the test case for the reach of universalism and the cosmopolitan possibilities of cross-cultural dialogue.<sup>47</sup>

Here both critics suggest that the relative remoteness of China made her a suitable opposite of Britain geographically and culturally. The cultural "Otherness" embedded in Lien Chi provided Goldsmith with a mechanism to examine contemporary British customs and practices, or European culture at large, from the perspective of an Oriental outsider. As China was traditionally regarded as one of the most distinctive representatives of Eastern culture, while Britain a representative of European or Western culture, Lien Chi's visit to Britain foretold a cultural collision between the East and the West.

Goldsmith's first two letters for the *Public Ledger* were published on January 24, 1760, and they were printed in small font and placed in a less prominent position

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various chinoiserie styles that appear can always be seen, and can sometimes be traced back to their source." See his introduction, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford UP, 1977) 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> See Vallance II. Besides, in one of his essays contributed to *The Monthly Review*, appeared in August 1757, Goldsmith notes the success of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and says "the success of the *Persian Letters* arouse from the delicacy of their satire. That satire which in the mouth of an Asiatic is poignant, would lose all its force when coming from an European." See Goldsmith, *Reviews from the Monthly Review and the Critical Review* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 104. Goldsmith might therefore prefer an Asiatic to a European to be his mouthpiece to ridicule the customs and manners of his contemporary British people.

<sup>46</sup> In his editor's preface, Letter XIV, XXXIII and CX Goldsmith ridiculed the vogue of Chinoiserie flourishing in Britain. He accused his fellow countrymen of importing Chinese furniture and frippery into Britain, which therefore ruined the British people's taste in arts and spoiled their lives to various degrees. Parker observes that "Goldsmith's satire must be set in the context of the eighteenth-century European craze for Chinoiserie. The embrace of the East was more about the perceived inadequacies of the West than any serious intellectual engagement with the cultures of Asia." See Parker 158.

<sup>47</sup> Parker 158.

in the newspaper. The first one was a letter of reference by a businessman residing in Amsterdam to one of his acquaintances in London. In the letter the Dutch merchant requests the addressee to take care of the protagonist, who is described as a philosopher and an honest man. He has learned the English language in Canton by conversing with the British merchants residing there on a regular basis; however, he is a complete stranger to British customs and manners. The second letter is from the Chinese philosopher to his referee, the Dutch businessman. In this letter Altangi explains the reason why he wishes to visit Britain in person, which is to examine the opulence, the architecture, the scientific developments, the artistic achievements and the manufacturing status of Britain.<sup>48</sup> The first three articles seemed to catch readers' interest quickly and after the fourth letter all correspondence was printed in larger font and placed in a more prominent position.<sup>49</sup> This series of letters ran for around twenty months and there were one hundred and nineteen letters in total. The last one was published on August 14, 1761. In 1762 the author made some careful revisions to the letters, added an editor's preface and four new letters<sup>50</sup> to the collection and then published them under the title *The Citizen of the World*. Nevertheless, while Goldsmith was still alive, this work did not appeal to the number of readers as his other later works did.<sup>51</sup> The second London edition was not even published until July of 1774, almost three months after his death.<sup>52</sup>

On the one hand, the work reveals many stereotypical images of the Chinese in the eyes of the British public; while on the other hand it also mirrors various

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<sup>48</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, vol. 2, 19.

<sup>49</sup> See Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 208-09.

<sup>50</sup> These four new letters are Nos. CXVII, CXIX, CXXI and CXXII. See Friedman, introduction, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, xi.

<sup>51</sup> Goldsmith's later works like *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) were warmly received by the audiences and readers. See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, 9-11 and vol. 5, 89-95.

<sup>52</sup> See Friedman, introduction, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, xii-xiv.

self-images of the beholders. Thus, though mainly designed to ridicule contemporary British traits in different aspects of their social life, this work also ridicules the British public's limited and wishful thinking about China and her people<sup>53</sup> and reflects many hetero-images and self-images of Goldsmith's contemporary Englishmen in a bitter and humorous light.

Before examining the images of the Chinese presented in *The Citizen of the World*, it seems appropriate to note briefly Goldsmith's sources about China as well as the general tone of the work. Scholars of Goldsmith have identified the three main sources of his knowledge about China and her citizens: these are Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine, 1687-1692* (1696),<sup>54</sup> Edward Cave's *A Description of the Empire of China* (1738-41) [an English translation of J. B. Du Halde's *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique et Physique de L'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (1735)] as well as Marquis d'Argens's *Lettres Chinoises: ou Correspondance Philosophique, Historique, & Critique, entre un Chinois Voyageur & ses Correspondance à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse & au Japon* [also known as *Chinese Letters*] (1755).<sup>55</sup> In addition to these three works, he might also have had some access to Voltaire's works about the Chinese as the names *Xixifou* and *Fipsihihi* he used are possibly from the French writer's works.<sup>56</sup>

Goldsmith adopts an ironic and satirical tone to ridicule various traits shown in

<sup>53</sup> In Letters XIV and XXXIII Goldsmith had his protagonist invited to two parties organized by two British women of distinction and ridiculed their pedanticism about the Chinese.

<sup>54</sup> The edition Goldsmith probably has consulted should be the third edition, which is published in Paris in 1697. See Friedman, introduction, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, x.

<sup>55</sup> See Friedman, introduction, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, x.

<sup>56</sup> For further information about possible sources of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* see Friedman, introduction, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, xx-xxi and his note of Goldsmith's "On Instability of Worldly Grandeur," *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 472. Besides, Qian Zhongshu suggests Goldsmith might also have consulted, except for the writers listed above, Thomas Simon Gueulette and other French writers. A clear evidence of Goldsmith's consultation of Gueulette's *Contes Chinois ou les Aventures Merveilleuses du Mandarin Fum-Hoam* (1733) is the name Fum-Hoam, a name he chooses for Altangi's correspondent in Peking. For additional information about Goldsmith's possible sources for his *The Citizen of the World*, see Qian 163-64.



his characters and sometimes their individual countries. For instance, in Letter L, Altangi gives a paradoxical comment on the judicial system of Britain. He says:

In England, from a variety of happy accidents, their constitution is just strong enough, or if you will, monarchical enough, to permit a relaxation of the severity of laws, and yet those laws still remain sufficiently strong to govern the people. This is the most perfect state of civil liberty, of which we can form any idea; here we see a greater number of laws than in any other country, while the people at the same time obey only such as are *immediately* conducive to the interests of society; several are unnoticed, many unknown; some kept to be revived and enforced upon proper occasions, others left to grow obsolete, even without the necessity of abrogation.<sup>57</sup>

In this passage Britain, as “the most perfect state of civil liberty,” is ironically ridiculed because though she seems to have more laws than any other country in the world, many of them are indeed not effectively put into practice to make people aware of them or even regularly reviewed to meet the immediate needs of society. Hence, Altangi launches his comment on the British juridical system by praising the country as “the most perfect state of civil liberty,” but ends by ridiculing the government for enacting excessive laws without enforcing them effectively or reevaluating them regularly. Similar ironies like this can be found throughout the work.

In addition to the ironic and satirical tone, it appears that it is rather universal humanity than specific traits of individuals that Goldsmith wishes to mock. Therefore, though sometimes the subjects are distinctively labeled as Chinese, British, French, Russian, Asiatic, or even European as a whole, their nationalities do not change the interpretations of the passages substantially. One of the examples

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<sup>57</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 211.

can be found in Letter CXIV, in which beauties from every corner of the world are gathering together to compete with each other to win the favour of the genius of love, who wishes to relocate himself in a more propitious place where he might be able to find more votaries. In this fable about marriage, Goldsmith classifies the competitors into ladies from China, Circassia, Kashmire, Southern America and Europe and then attributes various traits to them. At the end of the competition, it turns out to be the European ladies' references to several secular issues like settlements and pin money that make the genius of love fly into a rage, decide to give up his hope of finding a new dwelling on the earth and go back to his deserted plains of Abra (sic). Consequently, no matter whether these beauties are Asians or Europeans, it is humanity that Goldsmith wishes to satirize. The nationalities of the beauties therefore matter little in interpreting the meaning of this fable.

### **B. Images of the Chinese in *The Citizen of the World***

Due to the multi-voiced narrative of the work, readers can perceive two different kinds of images of the Chinese in this book. One group of images of the Chinese are proposed by the insiders of the country in question, the Chinese philosopher and his friends in China; another group of images by the outsiders, the general British public, particularly those presumptuous China-experts and Sinophiles.

Altangi, as a critical commentator on British or European customs and manners, is a person who is well aware of his limited and subjective perspective. He admits openly that his perspective is *de facto* conditioned by his personal experience and knowledge and therefore his judgments and observations might possibly be biased and partial. For instance, he tells his friend *Fum Hoam*, the first president of the ceremonial academy at Pekin,

When I had just quitted my native country, and crossed the Chinese wall, I fancied every deviation from the customs and manners of China was a departing from nature: I smiled at the blue lips and red foreheads of the Tonguese; and could hardly contain when I saw the Daures dress their heads with horns. The Ostiacs powdered with red earth, and then Calmuck beauties tricked out in all the finery of sheep-skin appeared highly ridiculous; but I soon perceived that the ridicule lay not in them but in me; that I falsely condemned others of absurdity, because they happened to differ from the standard originally founded in prejudice or partiality.<sup>58</sup>

Like the British guests in Letter XXXIII, whose Anglo-centrism leads them to assume it impossible that a Chinese philosopher, who was born five thousands miles away from London, should have common sense, it seems that in the early days of his residence in London the Chinese philosopher is endued with some kind of Sino-centrism too. He also looks down upon the foreign people, whom he encountered on his route to Britain, for their bizarre customs and manners. However, he soon comes to realize that it is his personal preference and prejudice that have made the cultural differences look so ridiculous. Being aware of fact that his perspective is likely to be conditioned by his personal experiences, he then reminds himself of the possible fallacy of such partiality. This self-awareness differentiates the Chinese philosopher from most other characters in the work and it also partially explains why he gradually changes his evaluation of Chinese traits after he acquires a more comprehensive understanding of British customs and manners. Therefore, in the first few days of his residence in London he is fundamentally a biased Chinese who assumes China occupies the centre of the world and most

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<sup>58</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 22.

customs and manners originating from China are superior to those of the “Others.”<sup>59</sup> However, after he comes to appreciate the differences between the customs and manners of the Chinese and those of the British and the Europeans, his arrogant and prejudiced perspective against foreigners is gradually replaced by a more humble one. Eventually, he recognizes that there are certain fallacies in Chinese laws and politics and comprehends that every political system has its own advantages and drawbacks. We may therefore say that Altangi has gone through some kind of cultural and spiritual enlightenment during the time he stayed in London because his earlier Sino-centralism has been gradually substituted by a more objective perspective as he finally transforms himself into a real citizen of the world.<sup>60</sup> After this brief survey of Altangi’s self-awareness and psychological rebirth, I will examine individual passages that might have attributed to picturing the Chinese.

Altangi compares Chinese women to British women and notes that the former are more beautiful than their European counterparts as the Chinese ladies were found to have small feet, broad faces, short noses, little eyes, thin lips, black teeth,<sup>61</sup> pale

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<sup>59</sup> Altangi’s friend Fum Hoam seems to hold a similar Sino-central perspective to look down upon all the non-Chinese as he calls the Europeans “the savage inhabitants of Europe.” See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 37.

<sup>60</sup> In his note Friedman notes that the term “philosopher” as equivalent to “citizen of the world” is well illustrated in Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle’s *Reflections of \*\*\*\*\* being a Series of Political Maxims: Illustrated by General History, as well as by Variety of Authentic Anecdotes (Never Published before) of Lewis XIV. . . . Fleury, and of Most of the Eminent Personages, in the Last and Present Century* [an English translation of *Mes Pensées* (1751)], no. 38 (1753) 26, in which we read “[t]he philosopher therefore has no country. He will be no philosopher if he had. He does not sacrifice a remote kindred for one nearer. He does not forget relations out of sight for those that are before his eyes: His heart takes in all virtues, and his progress all mankind. . . . I will subscribe the following lines to the bottom of the picture of that virtuous citizen of the world. . . .” Whereas at the very end of Goldsmith’s *Citizen*, the Chinese philosopher said “[a]s for myself the world being but one city to me, I don’t much care in which of the streets, I happen to reside, I shall therefore spend the remainder of life in examining the manners of different countries. . . .”

<sup>61</sup> In his *The General History of China*, Du Halde mentions that the natives of Formosa (Taiwan) have the fashion of blackening their teeth. Du Halde’s four-volume book is one of the main sources of Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World*, it is therefore possible that Goldsmith mistakenly considers black teeth an emblem of beauty of the Chinese ladies. See Du Halde, *The General History of China*, vol. 1 (1736) 178, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 27 June 2007 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

cheeks and small eye-brows.<sup>62</sup> The English women, who by contrast have big feet, red cheeks, big eyes and white teeth, are regarded as “horridly ugly” by the Chinese philosopher. He ridicules the masculine feet of British women for possibly serving the purpose of walking.<sup>63</sup> Altangi further elaborates on the general appearance of Chinese women by suggesting that Dutch beauties are very much like the Chinese ones in appearance, while British women are completely different from Chinese and Dutch ones in terms of their complexions.

Elsewhere in Letter CXIV, except for the black teeth and small eye-brows, several more characteristics of Chinese women are elaborated by the Chinese philosopher. He invents a fable to distinguish the charms of ladies from various lands. Of the Chinese ladies’ manners he says

No country could compare with them for modesty, either of look, dress, or behaviour; their eyes were never lifted from the ground, their robes of the most beautiful silk hid their hands, bosom, and neck, while their faces only were left uncovered.<sup>64</sup> They indulged no airs that might express loose desire, and they seemed to study only the graces of inanimate beauty. Their black teeth and plucked eye-brows were however alleged by the Genius against them, but he set them entirely aside when he came to examine their little feet.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 24-25. This description about the physiognomy of Chinese women is likely borrowed from Du Halde, in whose work we read “That which they chiefly admire, as making a perfect Beauty, is a large Forehead, short Nose, small Eyes, a Visage large and square, broad and large Ears, the Mouth middle-sized, and the Hair black, for they cannot bear to see it yellow or red; however, there must be a certain Symmetry and Proportion between all the Parts to render them agreeable. . . Their Complexion is not what has been usually represented by those who have seen only the Southern Parts of *China*, for it must be owned that the excessive Heats which prevail there, especially in *Quang tong*, *Fo kien*, and *Yun nan*, give the Mechanics and Peasants an olive or brown Complexion; but in other Provinces they are naturally as white as the *Europeans*, and, generally speaking, their Physiognomy has nothing disagreeable.” See Du Halde, *The General History of China*, vol. 2 (1736) 138, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 14 March 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>63</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 24-25.

<sup>64</sup> Similar descriptions about modesty and garments of the Chinese ladies can be found both in the works of Louis Le Comte and Du Halde. See Louis Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations Topographical, Physical, Mathematical, Mechanical, Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical Made in a Late Journey through the Empire of China* [Nouveaux Mémoires sur L’état Présent de la Chine, 1696] (London, 1699) 124-25, *The Making of the Modern World*, 14 March 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/>>; Du Halde, *General History of China*, vol. 2, 140-43.

As a whole, except for humorously attributing black teeth to Chinese ladies, most characteristics Goldsmith ascribes to the Chinese ladies are rather neutral or even positive. They are modest both in their appearances and behaviours and they show no signs of wantonness.

However, in order to ridicule the negative practices of Goldsmith's own fellow countrymen in an ironic way, the Chinese ladies are sometimes ascribed infamous charges. For instance, in one passage Altangi mentions that the fashion of gambling is widely enjoyed by genteel Chinese ladies and therefore he would like to reserve his praise for the ladies of Britain in this regard, which turns out to be a poignant irony against the latter. He says:

The Ladies here are by no means such ardent gamesters as the women of Asia. In this respect I must do the English justice, for I love to praise where applause is justly merited. Nothing more common in China than to see two women of fashion continue gaming 'till one has won all the other's cloaths, and stripped her quite naked; the winner thus marching off in a double suit of finery and the loser shrinking behind in the primitive simplicity of nature.<sup>65</sup>

However, if we read along Altangi's narrative about British ladies' indulgence in gambling, we come to realize that his former declaration of doing the British justice

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<sup>65</sup> Du Halde, *General History of China*, vol. 2, 442. The description about how Chinese ladies cover their faces and bodies with long gowns is probably borrowed from Du Halde's *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary*, see Friedman's note, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 442.

<sup>66</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 401-02. Regarding Chinese's likings for gambling, Le Comte observed that "Gaming is forbidden both to the Commentary and Gentry. Which nevertheless hinders not the *Chinese* from playing, sometimes even so long as till they have lost all their Estate, their Houses, their Children and their Wives, which they sometimes hazard upon a Card; for there is no degree of Extravagance to which the desire of Lucre and Riches will not carry a *Chinese*." See Le Comte, *Memoirs* 292. Of Goldsmith's story about gambling, Friedman indicated that in Le Comte's book he did not ascribe the fashion of gaming to Chinese ladies at all. See Friedman, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 402.

is in fact a poignant irony against the British themselves.<sup>67</sup> Again, Goldsmith has made an oblique accusation to ridicule an evil practice of his own fellow countrymen. This shows that Goldsmith does not intend to faithfully reproduce images of the Chinese fabricated by former writers. Instead, he changes them at his command in order to ridicule his own fellow countrymen in a paradoxical way. It explains why images of the Chinese sometimes appear contradictory, such as modest Chinese ladies and gaming-addicted Chinese ladies.

In terms of Chinese religions, Altangi notes that all the religious idols worshipped in China are brought from “the barbarous nations” around her<sup>68</sup> and there is no religious persecution practiced in China. However, by contrast, religious persecutions are some kind of calamities which have been commonly practiced in Britain and other European nations for centuries. With regard to this sharp contrast of religious lives of the Chinese and Europeans Altangi observed that,

Here [China] we see no religious persecutions, no enmity between mankind for difference in opinion. The disciplines of Lao Kium, the idolatrous sectaries of Fohi, and the philosophical children of Confucius, only strive to shew by their actions the truth of their doctrines.

Now turn from this happy peaceful scene, to Europe the theatre of intrigue, avarice and ambition. How many revolutions does it not experience in the compass even of one age; and to what do these revolutions tend but the destruction of thousands.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, what Altangi has depicted about the religious life of the Chinese here is a very positive picture, in which a non-violent competition can be found among people

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<sup>67</sup> Of the gambling fashion practiced by British ladies, Goldsmith suggested that they often wager on their beauty, fortune, health, or even their reputation and husbands at a gaming table. Nevertheless, the Chinese ladies are never permitted to gamble except on some great days and they mostly wager with their money only. See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 402-03.

<sup>68</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 448. The foreign idols are very likely referring to the Buddhist ones.

<sup>69</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 179.

of various religions. Again, Goldsmith produces this positive image about the Chinese people's religious life in order to ridicule the hostility exercised by people of different religious beliefs or sects in Britain and Europe, given the fact that most of them were probably derived from the same religion, Christianity.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of Chinese politics, Altangi declares that the Europeans might outdo the Chinese in many scientific aspects, such as ship building, casting cannons and measuring mountains, but they are certainly inferior to the Chinese in the art of governing their countries and peoples. He explains that this is partly due to the Chinese morality of "filial obedience," which makes them regard the state as a big patriarchal family, in which the citizens are willing to subject themselves to the body of authority and, as a result, views the emperor as a father, a protector or even a friend.<sup>71</sup> Altangi crowns the emperors of China "a race of philosophers," who were often found ready to give up their personal happiness and reputation to fight against idolatry, prejudice and tyranny.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, as he comes to have a better understanding of British politics, his confidence in the superiority of Chinese politics seems less strong. For instance, in Letter CXXI, he makes a comparison between the nature of Asian and British politics. He observes:

In Asia, for instance, where the monarch's authority is supported by force, and acknowledged through fear, a change of government is entirely unknown. All the inhabitants seem to wear the same mental complexion (sic), and remain contented with hereditary oppression. The sovereign's pleasure is the ultimate rule of duty, every branch of the administration is a perfect epitome of the whole; and if one tyrant is deposed, another starts up in his room to govern as his predecessor. The English, on the contrary, instead of being led by power, endeavour

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<sup>70</sup> For Goldsmith's attack on the religious hostility among Christians and between Christians and Muslims, see Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 179-80.

<sup>71</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 176-67.

<sup>72</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 177.



to guide themselves by reason; instead of appealing to the pleasure of the prince, appeal to the original rights of mankind. . . . The people of Asia are directed by precedent, which never alters; the English by reason, which is ever changing its appearance.<sup>73</sup>

Comparing this passage to his former praise of Chinese politics, we see that Altangi was slowly adjusting his evaluation of the Europeans ever since he came to Britain. The rulers of the Chinese empire, whom were often considered by European intellectuals as typical Asian monarchs, were no longer altruistic philosopher kings, but egoistic tyrants, whose only aim of running the country seems nothing else but keeping their dictatorship as long as possible. No matter how many times these tyrannous Asian sovereigns have been overthrown by others, once the successors take over the regimes, they still govern their people in a dictatorial and oppressive way. Hence, in contrast to the vigorous spirit of British politics, in which people's rights are defended by reasoning, Asian politics seem never to change its basic nature of governing—fear and oppression. This is the reason why after Altangi comes to have a better understanding of the nature of British politics, he favours the foreign one and discards his former belief in the superiority of Chinese politics.

Elsewhere in his essay “A Comparative View of Races and Nations,” published in the *Royal Magazine* in 1760, Goldsmith also praises Englishmen for their excellence in reasoning. He notes:

They [Englishmen] are distinguished from the rest of Europe by their superior accuracy in reasoning, and are in general called the nation of philosophers by their neighbours of the continent; this superiority of reason is only the consequence of their freedom.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 469. However, in Letter LXXX, Altangi makes a comparison on “the spirit of mercy” found in both Chinese laws and British laws, in which he compliments on the former and ridicules on the later. See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 326-27.

<sup>74</sup> See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 85.

Hence, it is rather the freedom of reasoning than the power to subordinate subjects that Goldsmith regards as something more approvable and positive, though there are still some disadvantages one might need to contemplate as one favours a government run by reasoning, or namely democracy.<sup>75</sup> We may say that, in terms of the collective image of the Chinese emperors, the early image of enlightened Chinese emperors, presented in Polo and Mandeville's stories, was diminishing in English literature from the mid-eighteenth century. This phenomenon suggests that as more genuine information about the Chinese was brought back Europe in the eighteenth century, earlier idealistic images of the Chinese were gradually discarded by later writers.

Altangi makes an interesting comparison between the ways of greetings conducted by Chinese porters and British ones. He comments that:

The poor indeed of every country are but little prone to treat each other with tenderness, their own miseries are too apt to engross all their pity, and perhaps too they give but little commiseration as they find but little from others. But in England the poor treat each other upon every occasion, with more than savage animosity, and as if they were in a state of open war by nature. In China, if two porters should meet in a narrow street, they would lay down their burthens, make a thousand excuses to each other for the accidental interruption, and beg pardon on their knees; if two men of the same occupation should meet here they would first begin to scold and at last to beat each other. One would think they had miseries enough resulting from penury and labour not to encrease [sic] them by ill nature among themselves, and subjection to new penalties, but such considerations never weigh with them.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Of the disadvantage of British government, Altangi argued that lack of cooperation, clamour, prejudice were all very common in a government run by reasoning. See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 469.

<sup>76</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 369-70. This story is very likely borrowed from Du Halde, in whose book we read "The Chinese in general are mild, tactable, and humane; there is a great deal of Affability in their Air and Manner, and nothing harsh, rough, or passionate: This Moderation is

Taking the poor as an epitome of a whole race, Goldsmith therefore presents the Chinese as friendly and polite, though he might have ironically exaggerated that the Chinese porters should easily ask for pardon on their knees.<sup>77</sup>

In summary, after Altangi stayed in London for some time, he no longer assumes that the Chinese can be a model for the Europeans to imitate. He realizes that the Europeans are better than the Chinese both in science and politics, while the latter seems to have lost their earlier superiority in arts, laws and morality. In Letter LXIII Altangi reveals his concern about the future of China to Fum Hoam after reviewing his careful observations made on Britain and other lands of Europe:

Yet believe me, my friend, that even China itself is imperceptibly degenerating from her antient [sic] greatness; her laws are now more venal, and her merchants are more deceitful than formerly; the very arts and science have run to decay. Observe the carvings on our antient bridges, figures that add grace even to nature. There is not an artist now in all the empire that can imitate their beauty. Our manufactures in porcelaine [sic] too are inferior to what we once were famous for, and even Europe now begins to excel us. There was a time when China was the receptacle of strangers, when all were welcome who either came to improve the state, or admire its greatness; now the empire is shut up from every foreign improvement; and the very inhabitants discourage each other from prosecuting their own internal advantages.<sup>78</sup>

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remarkable among the Vulgar themselves: "I was one Day (says *Pere de Fontaney*) in a narrow long Lane, where there happened in a short time a great Stop of the Carriages; I expected they would have fallen into a Passion, used opprobrious Language, and perhaps have come to Blows, as is very common in *Europe*; but I was much surpriz'd to see that they saluted each other, spoke mildly, as if they had been old Acquaintance, and lent their mutual Assistance to pass each other." See Du Halde, *General History of China*, vol. 2 (London, 1736) 128, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 14 March 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Ecco>>.

<sup>77</sup> In Letter IV Altangi also praised the British gentry for their politeness and said "the English seem more polite than any of their neighbours: their great art in this respect lies in endeavouring, while they oblige, to lessen the force of the favour." See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 30.

<sup>78</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 262.

Obviously, Altangi's narrow Sino-centralistic perspective is replaced by that of a cosmopolitan. He has changed himself from a narrow-minded Chinese traveler into a citizen of the world.<sup>79</sup>

In fact, the Chinese philosopher's self-disparagement somehow maximizes the writer's criticism of Chinese politics because that criticism is proposed by a reflective insider, instead of a faultfinding outsider. Furthermore, Altangi's evaluation of his own country also implies that China's heyday has gone and she has become a land of deceitfulness, degeneration and venality. Neither her arts nor her laws deserve the Europeans to imitate any more. It is the failure to recognize this fact and the blind passion for Chinoiserie fashions that Goldsmith wishes to tackle in his work.

### C. British public's images of the Chinese in *The Citizen of the World*

Let us now turn to examine how British citizens perceived the Chinese in Goldsmith's time. In *The Citizen of the World* the Chinese philosopher is invited to several parties hosted by local Londoners and it is at these parties that the Englishmen disclose their preconceived and stereotypical impressions of the Chinese.

Possibly being the first Chinese that they have ever seen in person, the Londoners, except for the man in black who is entrusted with the care of Altangi by the Dutch businessman, apply their limited and unexamined knowledge about the

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<sup>79</sup> A clear evidence of Altangi's change in perspective might be best illustrated in the following passage. At the end of Letter XCI, Altangi says "Foreigners are generally shocked at their [English] insolence upon first coming among them; they find themselves ridiculed and insulted in every street: they meet with none of those trifling civilities, so frequent elsewhere, which are instances of mutual good will without previous acquaintance; they travel through the country either too ignorant or too obstinate to cultivate a closer acquaintance, meet every moment something to excite their disgust, and return home to characterise this as the region of spleen, insolence and ill-nature. In short, England would be the last place in the world I would travel to by way of amusement; but the first for instruction. I would chuse to have others for my acquaintance, but Englishmen for my friends." See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 371.

Chinese to entertain and judge the Chinese visitor. For instance, in Letter XIV an British lady of distinction is so keen to see the Chinese philosopher in person that she arranges an interview at her apartment to meet him. However, as Altangi dresses himself in the fashion of a European, she can not recognize him at first glance but considers him as a local Englishman. Later when her footman informs her that he is *de facto* the gentleman from China, the lady immediately corrects her error by falsely identifying the “unusual share of *somethingness*” in Altangi’s appearance, such as “the outlandish cut of his face” and “the exotic breadth of his forehead.”<sup>80</sup> This incident illustrates that there is a stereotypical image of the Chinese held by the British lady and this image is likely originated from the figures painted on her collection of Chinese porcelain. Le Comte observed that

It were well if the *Chinese* Designs in their Paintings were a little better. Their Flowers were pretty well, but their Human Figures are monstrous. Which disgrace them among Strangers, who imagine, that they are in effect as monstrous in their Shape as they appear in their Pictures; yet those are their usual Ornaments. The more regular Designs and skillful Draughts would be less pleasing to them than these Anticks.<sup>81</sup>

This observation explains why there should exist a huge difference between the pictures of the Chinese known to the Europeans and the real physiognomy of the subjects. It is rather the Chinese’s own misleading representation of themselves than the Europeans’ misreading of the subjects that makes the Europeans fail to come up with correct images of the Chinese in the first place.

In order to show off her knowledge about Chinese customs, the hostess asks one of her servants to bring a plate of beef, which has been cut into small pieces, and

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<sup>80</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 63-64.

<sup>81</sup> Le Comte, *Memoirs* 153.

requests Altangi to demonstrate how to eat the beef with chopsticks, which she assumes her Chinese guest must have brought on his person. Furthermore, she asks Altangi to show her some items he has brought with him from China, something which she expects to be pretty but of no use in the world.<sup>82</sup> When Altangi does not comply with her requests and proves himself to be a man of “taste,” who dares to underestimate the value of the porcelain utensils she has collected, the British lady immediately pronounces Altangi an “actual barbarian” from China. Therefore, though she is in possession of several items from China, which include many porcelain ornaments and two Egyptian pyramid-like “Chinese” temples in her garden, she indeed shows very little understanding about the Chinese and their culture.<sup>83</sup> The only thing she is right about the Chinese is probably their habits of using chopsticks. We may conclude that this British lady holds no positive images about the Chinese at all, though she seems to be an enthusiastic collector of things in Chinese styles.

In Letter XXXIII, Altangi’s identity as a genuine Chinese is questioned again by another British lady of distinction when he is found to be a man with common sense and his visage to bear no “exotic barbarity” at all. His appearance and manner are against all the images that the lady has read about the Chinese in contemporary eastern tales or oriental histories. Like the lady who asks Altangi to show her how to eat beef with chopsticks, the British lady in this episode also,

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<sup>82</sup> In Letter LXXXIX, Altangi also mentions how ignorant the British are about the usage of the Chinese items they have collected. He indicates the fact that “They have even now in their Indian warehouse numberless utensils, plants, minerals and machines, of the use of which they are intirely[sic] ignorant; nor can any among them even make a probable guess for what they might have been designed.” See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 361. In his “Improvements and Discoveries that Might Attend a More Extensive Knowledge of Remote Countries,” appeared in the *Weekly Magazine* on January 12, 1760, Goldsmith also attacks the British for collecting Oriental items without knowing their usages. See Friedman’s note, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 361.

<sup>83</sup> Of the chinoiserie characters and figures inscribed on English porcelain of the eighteenth century, Hugh Honour points out that they are mostly exaggerated and therefore “far removed from Chinese originals.” The chinoiserie wares cannot help the British public to have a better picture of the eighteenth-century China. See his *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961) 109-11.

applying her knowledge about the Chinese, tries to entertain the Chinese philosopher in a civil “Chinese” manner. For instance, though Altangi protested that the Chinese also use chairs as the Europeans do, he is still offered a cushion to sit on, instead of a chair, at the dining table.<sup>84</sup> He is asked whether he cares for some “Bear’s claws” or “Birds nests,” rather than what the other guests would have, such as a slice of beef, as they believe the Chinese do not consume beef.<sup>85</sup> In addition to these, a gentleman, whom Altangi presumes to be an author, even tries to prove that Lien has nothing of the true Chinese because his visage, cheek bones and forehead do not match the images of the Chinese that he knows about.<sup>86</sup> Instead of finding him a man of ignorance and barbarity, the hostess and all the British guests presented soon lose interest in the foreign visitor because the Chinese philosopher has proved himself a man of considerable knowledge and manners, a reasonable creature, rather than just “an outlandish idiot[sic].” P. Brunel and others suggests that

An image is an individual or collective representation which has been added cultural, emotional, objective and subjective elements. No foreigner will be able to see a country in the way as the locals wish him to see. That is to say the emotional factors surpass the objective ones. . . . Images are myths and mirages, the latter term suggests an irresistible attraction. It arouses our admiration and makes us lose control of our reason. The attraction is nothing but a projection of our personal dreams and desires.<sup>87</sup>

It suggests that one’s preconceptions or other emotional factors, such as one’s

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<sup>84</sup> In his footnote Friedman highlights the fact that Du Halde has mentioned that the Chinese use chairs both at visits and feasts; therefore, Goldsmith might have produced a genuine misconception about the Chinese in order to ridicule the ignorance of the British lady in this instance. See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 143.

<sup>85</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 143.

<sup>86</sup> Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 144.

<sup>87</sup> P. Brunel et al, “Xingxiang yu renmin xinlixue” [Images et psychologie des peuples], trans. Zhang Liankui, *Bijiawenxue xingxiangxue*, ed. Meng Hua (Beijing: Beijing UP, 2001) 113-14. For original French text, see appendix 3.

personal favour or disliking, may shield oneself from seeing the reality as it is, even the reality is placed right in front of one's eyes. Hence, Altangi can never make the British he met to see him or his country from the perspective adopted by him. Instead, they prefer to keep their own images of China and the Chinese and expect Altangi to fit in with them. When Altangi fails to comply with their imagination, they show no indication at all to adjust or discard their biased images against the Chinese but to question Altangi's Chinese identity. This phenomenon therefore suggests that the British images of the Chinese do not reflect the empirical reality of the objects, but the desires or fantasies of different British viewers.

These two episodes may therefore reflect something about British people's images of the Chinese in the 1760s. First, most British people got their own images of the Chinese via reading popular Oriental fictions or observing the Chinese characters painted on the Chinoiserie wares,<sup>88</sup> rather than reading works by the Jesuits or other specialists of Chinese culture. Second, it seemed that the images of the Chinese held by the British public in the 1760s were mostly negative. In their minds, the Chinese were barbarous, irrational, savage, uncivil and unmannered.<sup>89</sup> Their oriental wares might be beautiful, but they were mostly impractical and useless. Third, when the vogue of Chinoiserie hit Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it is the exoticism of the Chinoiserie items and the Oriental tales, rather than the Chinese people's accomplishments in arts, manners, morality and philosophies,

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<sup>88</sup> Of the fantastic and grotesque images of the Chinese on the Chinese porcelain, Honour points out monkeys are often associated with the Chinese by European painters of the seventeenth century. He says "Whatever the origin of the cult, monkeys came to be associated in the European mind with China before the end of the seventeenth century. . . . In the *grande singerie* [fig. 3] Christophe Huet [French artist, 1700-1759] mixed mandarins and monkeys so freely that it is often difficult to tell whether an individual figure represents a simian Chinaman or a sapient ape." See Honour, *Chinoiserie* 91, plate 37. Honour's observation may partially explains why Altangi, as noted in Letter XXXIII, found he astonished all the British people he encountered with his "common sense," an capability that was exclusively attributed to the Europeans/human beings, rather than the non-Europeans or the sub-humans.

<sup>89</sup> Fum Hoam also considers the Europeans impolite and savage. Therefore, not only the British but also the Chinese characters in this work hold some kind of self-centralism when viewing "the other."



that attracted the British public.



Fig. 3. *Singerie* (c. 1735) by Christopher Huet; in Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961) Pl. 37.

## D. Summary

From previous analysis we may say that Goldsmith's general attitude towards the Chinese and their culture seems to be rather negative. For instance, in his editor's preface to *The Citizen of the World*, Goldsmith accuses the Chinese of vitiating British taste as the British have imported nothing worthy from China, only exotic and luxury furniture, frippery and fireworks.<sup>90</sup> In the eighteenth century, the extent of industrialization tended to be regarded as an indication of one country's power and Britain was consequently considered by her people as the most highly developed and powerful country in Europe or even in the world.<sup>91</sup> By contrast, China was still a traditional agricultural state and her industrial manufacturing and scientific development was comparatively backward and stagnant. Hence, except for tea, porcelain and some other handicrafts, China had little to offer those industrialized European countries in the eighteenth century.<sup>92</sup> On top of that, China had been described by many western missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth century as a country of little change in most aspects. Consequently, China gradually became an emblem of backwardness and stagnancy, which was in a sharp contrast to the rapidly industrializing Europe on the move. So, though Goldsmith exaggerated some descriptions of Chinese customs and manners, his descriptions of the Chinese mostly matched the Chinese images held by his contemporaries, whose

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<sup>90</sup> See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 15.

<sup>91</sup> In Letter XVII, Altangi also mentioned "[t]he English and French seem to place themselves foremost among the champion states of Europe." See Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 72.

<sup>92</sup> At the end of Letter XVII Altangi talked about Britain and France's wars over the colony in North America and the possible exchange of colony's commodities and colonizers' management. Of the economic exchange between the colony in North America and Britain, he stated "And what are the commodities which this colony when establish'd, are to produce in return? Why raw silk, hemp, and tobacco. England, therefore, must make an exchange of her best and bravest subjects for raw silk, hemp, and tobacco; her hardy veterans, and honest tradesmen must be truck'd for a box of snuff or a silk petticoat." Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest Goldsmith might have judged a nation by whether she has the power to control others or not and what she can offer or produce for the global communities. For more about Goldsmith's argument over the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, see Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 74-75.

sources of information about the Chinese were probably the exotic oriental stories, the Chinoiserie products or the translated missionary reports.

In addition to these negative presentations of Chinese general characteristics, elsewhere Goldsmith also criticizes the Chinese for their low taste in poetry. He comments:

Of all nations that ever felt the influence of the inspiring goddess, perhaps the Chinese are to be placed in the lowest class; their productions are the most phlegmatic that can be imagined. In those pieces of poetry, or novel, translations, some of which we have seen, and which probably may soon be made public, there is not a single attempt to address the imagination, or influence the passions; such therefore are very improper models for imitation: and Voltaire, who was perhaps sensible of this, has made very considerable deviations from the original. Our English poet has deviated still farther, and, in proportion as the plot has become more European, it has become more perfect.<sup>93</sup>

Towards the end of the story, most images of the Chinese therefore turn from positive to negative. The final view of the Chinese turns out to be a less civilized and cultivated people than the Europeans. As a result, except for the Chinese philosopher, who shows certain positive characteristics, such as courteous, knowledgeable, modest, polite and understanding, Goldsmith's general evaluation of the Chinese as a race is mostly negative. As China seems to have nothing in particular worthy the British to admire or to copy in the eighteenth century and China has also shown no sign of improvement but degeneration and stagnancy for centuries, it therefore makes Goldsmith regard his fellow countrymen's craziness for Chinoiserie irrational and unwise. In addition, though Goldsmith has borrowed a

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<sup>93</sup> This comment is given by Goldsmith on the performance of an adapted Chinese play entitled *The Orphan of China*. For Goldsmith's further comments on the faults of Chinese poetry and the beauties of European poetry see his "The Orphan of China, a Tragedy, as it is performed at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane," see Goldsmith, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 170-79.

lot of materials from other sources about China,<sup>94</sup> which often present China as an eastern utopia, his narrative turns out to be a reverse discourse which shattered the old picture of China and reshaped the Chinese images in a less favourable light.

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<sup>94</sup> The sources about China that Goldsmith has consulted include *Memoirs and Observations Topographical, Physical, Mathematical, Mechanical, Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical Made in a Late Journey through the Empire of China* (1697) by Louis Le Comte, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687) by Philippe Couplet and others, , *Essais sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (Essay on the Manner and Spirit of Nations, 1756) by Voltaire, an English translation of Marquis D'Argens's *Lettres Chinoise* (Chinese Letters, 1741) and Edward Cave's edition of Du Halde's *The General History of China*, entitled *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary* (1738-42). See Vallance 10, Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 216.

## Chapter Seven

### China and the Chinese as a Negative “Other” in British Literature from the 1790s to the 1840s

#### I. A historical review of political contacts between Britain and China

This chapter will consider images of the Chinese presented in writings of John Wolcot and Thomas De Quincey, who directly or indirectly suggested that China was a backward country and she would be an easy prey of the British Empire. During the first forty years of the nineteenth century the British government sent the Amherst Embassy to China in 1816 and launched her first Opium War against China in 1839, resulting in the relationship between Britain and China reaching its lowest point. Ever since the Amherst Embassy failed, the British public's attitude towards China worsened. One of the main reasons is probably because they reckoned that the national prestige of Britain was humiliated by an arrogant and less civilized people from the Orient. Indeed, it was hard to find a country in the world which would take the risk to challenge the strong military power of Britain at that time. Hence, when the news of how the Amherst Embassy was discourteously expelled from Peking within 24 hours of its arrival reached London, it was not surprising that the British public felt insulted.

For a country like China which traditionally assessed a country's importance by the size of its land, Britain barely bore any weight in the minds of the Chinese ruling class before the 1840s. As evidence suggests, Emperor Daoguang did not even know the exact geographical location of Britain when the first Opium War broke out.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, as Britain usually estimates a country's strength by the size of its army, China was likely to be deemed insignificant by most British intellectuals before the mid nineteenth century. As mentioned in chapter three, most British

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<sup>1</sup> See Ma, *Wanqing diguo shiyexia de yingguo* 99.

visitors who visited China<sup>2</sup> before the 1840s indicated that the Chinese troops were not a match for the well-equipped British troops.

## II. Two Chinas in John Wolcot's satires

As Lord Macartney set off for China in 1792, a popular topical satirist named John Wolcot, writing under the pseudonym of Peter Pindar,<sup>3</sup> published three satires ridiculing the expedition. These three poems, which comprise two lyric epistles and an ode, were individually addressed to Lord Macartney, the ambassador's ship "Lion," and Emperor Kien Long [Qianlong].

Before he became a supporter of the government in 1795,<sup>4</sup> Wolcot enjoyed fame as an anti-royal satirist for about a decade. His favourite subjects included the

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<sup>2</sup> In the travel accounts of George Anson, John Bell, John Meares, Aeneas Anderson and George Staunton, all visitors of China have suggested that a certain number of well-equipped British cavalry and infantry will be enough to beat all Chinese troops. Besides, in the works of Daniel Defoe, Francis Lockier, Thomas De Quincey and John Wolcot, the writers also suggest that showing the Chinese government the powerful military force of Britain is one of the most efficient ways to make the Chinese change their arrogant attitude towards Britain and only a small number of British troops is enough to carry out the plan. See Ge Guiliu, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 104-06, 121, 304; Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. David Masson, vol. 14 (London: A. & C. Black, 1897) 195-97.

<sup>3</sup> It was in 1782 that Wolcot first adopted "Peter Pindar" as his pseudonym, with which he published his *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians*. See William R. Jones, 'Wolcot, John (bap. 1738, d. 1819)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 2004. 23 May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29828>>. The only work that carries his true name is a satire called "A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China: On His Uncourtly and Impolitic Behaviour to the Sublime Ambassadors of Great Britain," published in 1817, two years before he dies. The pseudonym "Peter Pindar" was also used by other writers like James Harrison in 1795 and C. F. Lawler since 1812. See Kenneth Hopkins, *Portraits in Satire* (London: Barrie, 1958) 267; Robert L. Vales, *Peter Pindar* (New York: Twayne, 1973) 159.

<sup>4</sup> Of this dramatic change of attitude towards the monarch and the government William R. Jones specifies that "[t]he offer of a state pension was revived in 1795, this time with a view to Wolcot's writing verses supporting the government. An apparent reversal of his pro-revolutionary stance had been noticed in his recent writings: his *Rights of Kings* (1791), echoing [Tom] Paine, which had taken a strong anti-monarchy line, was within a year followed by *Odes to Mr Paine* which was equally vituperative against the revolutionary cause. On this occasion he allowed himself to be persuaded into an agreement that Peter Pindar might write odes in support of the administration. Nevertheless, he produced nothing much of worth in his new establishment role, and later confessed to a great sense of shame at the whole shabby enterprise. This episode marked a turning point in Wolcot's career. Despite continuing buoyant sales for his work, and the gradual revival of some of his old fire, the ebullience of his roistering attacks on court and ministers was never regained." See Jones' "Wolcot, John." Besides, P. M. Zall also suggests that it is due to a mixture of factors, such as British force's victories in Europe, good harvests, restrictions on press and public speech, as well as a resurgence of patriotic feeling that made Peter slowly lose his popularity with the public. See Zall, introduction, *Peter Pindar's Poems* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1972) 2-3.

Royal Academy, the courtiers and George III.<sup>5</sup> His works often mirrored his sensitivity to contemporary social evils and injustices, such as slavery, poverty, laws of sporting and profiteering.<sup>6</sup>

Over the past decades, many scholars have pointed out that the poet's name seemed to have caught little attention from modern readers, given the fact that his witty and sarcastic works used to enjoy a large readership in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century and some of his works were even printed ten times in a year.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the study of Wolcot's fame in English literature, Kenneth Hopkins suggests that he is "one of the strangest figures in English poetry," adding that "[h]e has been the subject of no biography, and he makes comparatively little appearance in the memoirs and letters of his contemporaries."<sup>8</sup> A. L. Rowse, nevertheless, gives us a glimpse of his popularity by saying that "Peter Pindar's fame in his own day was something difficult for us to realise: seven or ten editions in a year of his burlesques and lampoons, the booksellers falling over each other to print his works."<sup>9</sup> Robert L. Vales regards Wolcot "the most important satirist between Jonathan Swift and Lord Byron," and suggests that his "political satires perhaps aid in accounting for the decline of satire since the shift from general folly to particular personalities limits the scope of attack, and the personal rather than the universal is stressed."<sup>10</sup> However, it seems that Wolcot's high popularity as a satirist did not catch much attention from the Chinese scholars either.<sup>11</sup> Hence, in order to fill a

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<sup>5</sup> Pindar comically confesses that "The King [George III] has been a good subject to me, but I have been a bad subject to his Majesty." See A. L. Rowse, foreword, *Peter Pindar's Poems*, vii.

<sup>6</sup> See Jones, "Wolcot, John."

<sup>7</sup> See Hopkins 217; Rowse vii; Vales 7.

<sup>8</sup> Hopkins 219.

<sup>9</sup> Rowse vii.

<sup>10</sup> Vales 7. Zall further indicates that it is Wolcot's "Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians," a popular series of odes, appearing annually for five years, which mix "art criticism, old jokes, folk tales, and current gossip," and decorate with "a lively rhythm and jocular rhymes," that foretells Byron's *Don Juan*. See Zall, introduction 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> According to my study, Wolcot's works were not mentioned by any Chinese scholar before.

gap in the study of British images of the Chinese, I will analyse the satirist's works relating to the representation of China and the Chinese in this section. It is hoped that this analysis of Wolcot's works will introduce to readers another British writer that has contributed to the British images of the Chinese in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries.

Before considering the images of the Chinese and Emperor Qianlong depicted in the following works by Wolcot, it is interesting to note that he did not seem to have any consistent political philosophy in mind. One of his friends, Cyrus Redding, pointed out that he "could scarcely be called a politician. He did not trouble his head about foreign affairs."<sup>12</sup> William R. Jones also suggested it was rather his dislike for social injustice and his personal enmity for fools or rogues in high office that fueled his passion for satire.<sup>13</sup> Hence, as the following analysis might reflect, Wolcot's references to the Chinese and Kien Long bear little personal understanding of China and her politics. Instead, the exotic land and the monarchs of China are more likely employed as the "Other" to ridicule the misconduct of the British government and George III.

According to my primary research, Wolcot has published at least five poems about China and the Chinese.<sup>14</sup> They include *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship* (1792), *Odes to Kien Long, The Present Emperor of China* (1792), "Ode to the Lion Ship of War" (*Pindariana*, 1794), and *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China; on His Uncourtly and Impolitic Behaviour to the Sublime Ambassadors of Great Britain* (1817).<sup>15</sup> Published across

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<sup>12</sup> Cyrus Redding, *Past Celebrities Whom I have Known*, vol. 1 (London: 1866) 237.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, "Wolcot, John."

<sup>14</sup> In his *Pindariana: Peter's Portfolio* (London, 1794-95), Wolcot includes a transliteration and his own translation of Kien Long's poem "A Panegyric on Tea." Besides, a poem entitled "Ode to Coffee, in the Manner of Kien Long" is also included in this collection. As these three works barely related to the discussion of Wolcot's representation of China, they will not be discussed here.

<sup>15</sup> In the postscript of this work, the poet mentions that before the publication of the present poem he



a quarter of century, these works significantly reflect the poet's different images of the Chinese as an "Other" and the British as a "Self" at different stages of his writing career.

#### ***A. A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship***

This pair of poems includes "A Lyric Epistle to Lord Macartney, Ambassador to the Court of China" and "A Lyric Epistle to the Ship." Both poems are written in the mock-heroic style to satirize the unheroic and unpromising journey of the Macartney embassy (1792-94). In the first poem, Wolcot depicts Macartney as a royal messenger reporting to Kien Long on the political chaos and social injustices of Britain, such as rebellions against the king,<sup>16</sup> the coal tax that agonized the poor,<sup>17</sup> corruption by members of the House of the Lords,<sup>18</sup> as well as an unsuccessful parliamentary reform, which was initiated by Charles Lennox (1735-1806), the third Duke of Richmond, in the 1780s.<sup>19</sup> Most of the poem is dedicated to criticizing the evils and social injustices of the time, which are set against the poet's personal admiration for the Duke of Richmond's victories on the battlefield and his sympathy for Richmond's unsuccessful parliamentary reform bill, rather than to comment on Macartney's embassy and his mission. Hence, the last part of the poem, which mentions Kien Long's worry about the possible destruction of his palace by Richmond's troops, turns out to be a key passage for us to analyse Wolcot's images of the Chinese Empire and the poet's own country.

In the last part of the poem Macartney questions the poet "Why should I say

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has written another poem called "A Lyric Epistle to Lord Amherst and Sir George Staunton." However, the poem was, by some accident, mislaid before publication. The lost poem is now nowhere can be found in any collection of Wolcot's works.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Pindar, *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and his Ship* (London: 1792) 2, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 25 May 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>17</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 4.

<sup>18</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 7.

<sup>19</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 9.

all this unto the King?" In response to this question, the poet sarcastically answers that:

Thou cryest, O Macartney.—Good may spring:  
It may unto thine embassy give weight,  
By putting great KIEN LONG into a fright.<sup>20</sup>

What an irony it is to scare Kien Long with the evils and chaos of British politics! Then Wolcot changes his perspective from the narrator's to that of Kien Long and suggests that China is likely to be no match for Britain in a military confrontation. He says

"Who knows," KIEN LONG may whine with rueful face,  
"But all the rank and file are like His GRACE—  
"Then shall I shake upon my sapphire throne:  
"For troops like RICHMOND, that on valour feast,  
"May, like wild meteors, pour into mine East,  
"And leave my palace neither stick nor stone;  
  
"Like roaring lions rush to eat me up—  
"In Britain breakfast, and in China sup."<sup>21</sup>

Wolcot's narrative somehow reflected the triumphalism of the British, in which the poet self-assuredly regards his own country as a powerful predator, symbolized as a roaring lion, while the eastern Chinese empire as a ready prey.<sup>22</sup> Kien Long and his

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<sup>20</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 13.

<sup>21</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 13.

<sup>22</sup> Wolcot's foresight was proved right decades later in the second Opium War, when the alliance of British and French troops invaded Peking and burned down the imperial summer resort Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Splendor) in 1860. Raymond Dawson suggests that as the British made distinctive industrial progress at home and succeeded in expanding overseas territory since early nineteenth century, the feeling of superiority also widely crept into the minds of the British citizens. Therefore, Wolcot's confidence in the powerful strength of the British troops is probably a reveal of the collective imagination of his fellow countrymen. For Dawson's analysis about the originality of the British sense of superiority, see his *The Chinese Chameleon* 132.

empire are used as a vulnerable “Other” to highlight the strong military power of the British, the “Self”. Speaking timidly about the possible devastation of his palace, Kien Long does not sound like a mighty monarch at all. He is pictured as a feeble and timorous eastern monarch in the face of British troops. Wolcot’s interpretation of China’s military power is generally in accordance with the accounts of contemporary European intellectuals.<sup>23</sup>

In his “A Lyric Epistle to the Ship” Wolcot continues to comment on Macartney’s embassy. As implied in the former poem, he considers Macartney’s embassy to China a confrontation between a backward eastern empire and an advanced western power. Macartney’s vessel, *Lion*, a ship with sixty-four cannons, is greeted by the Chinese in “the Asiatic world”<sup>24</sup> in the following way.

Methinks I view thee tow’ring at Canton:  
I hear each wide-mouth’d salutation-gun;  
I see thy streamers wanton in the gale;  
I see the sallow natives crowd the shore,  
I see them tremble at thy royal roar;  
I see the very MANDARINES turn pale.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ever since the Jesuits and other Europeans brought genuine knowledge about the scientific development of the Chinese, especially their knowledge and skills of making fire-arms, the military strength of the Chinese empire is always underestimated by the Europeans. A typical example can be found in Daniel Defoe’s *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), in which the protagonist visits China and suggests that “one *English, Dutch, or French* man of war of 80 guns, would fight and destroy all the shipping of China . . . all the Forces of their Empire, tho’ they were to bring two Millions of Men into the Field together, would be able to do nothing but ruin the Country, and starve themselves: If they were to besiege a strong Town in *Flanders*, or to fight a disciplin’d Army, one line of *German Cuirassiers* [Cuirassiers], or of *French Cavalry*, would overthrow all the Horse of China; A Million of their Foot could not stand before one embattled Body of our Infantry, posted so as not to be surrounded, tho’ they were to be not One to Twenty in Number; nay, I do not boast, if I say that 30000 *German or English* Foot, and 10000 *French* Horse, would fairly beat all the Forces of *China*: . . .” A similar self-confidence in the superiority of British military force can also be seen in George Anson’s account, in which he suggests that “the [British man-of-war] *Centurion* alone was an over-match for all the naval power of that Empire . . . This may suffice to give an idea of the defenceless state of the *Chinese* Empire.” See Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London, 1719) 297-98, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 6 May 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>; George Anson, *A Voyage round the World* 414-15.

<sup>24</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 14.

<sup>25</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 14.

In contrast to the “gaudy gentlemen on board,”<sup>26</sup> the local people of Canton are described as sallow and quivering at the sight of the ship, while the faces of local officers turn pale as they confront the gigantic British vessel. In addition, the splendor of the British ship even makes the pagodas bow, rivers rise, cuckoos and geese give praise, monkeys pray, crowds of people applaud.<sup>27</sup>

Then, Wolcot changes his tone dramatically as he predicts that the embassy is more likely to be a disappointing and humiliating one. When the Chinese emperor asks Macartney the purpose of his long journey, the British ambassador outspokenly answers him that:

“With tin, and blankets, O great King, to barter,  
 “And gimcracks rare for China-Man and Tartar.  
 “But presents, presents are the things we mean:  
 “Some pretty diamonds to *our gracious* QUEEN,  
 “Big as one’s fist or so, or somewhat bigger,  
 “Would cut upon her petticoat a figure—  
 “A petticoat of whom each poet sings,  
 “That beams on birth-days for the Best of Kings.

“Yes, presents are the things we chiefly wish—  
 “These give not half the toil we find in trade.”<sup>28</sup>

Exchanging tin, blankets and unusual toys for diamonds, Wolcot suggests that trading is the only concern of the embassy and ridicules the British government and

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<sup>26</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 14.

<sup>27</sup> See Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 15. In “A Lyric Epistle to the Ship” Wolcot suggests that when Macartney’s ship arrives Canton, all living creatures and nonliving objects of China came to greet her respectfully. Pagodas and mountains bow to the Britons on board and floods also raise their voice to greet the visitors. Moreover, cuckoos, monkeys, frogs, butterflies, pigs, goats, sheep, oxen, buffaloes, dromedaries, and elephants all happily pay their homage to the showy foreign visitors and their vessel. Whereas in Ode V of “Odes to Kien Long” Wolcot also implies that humming-birds, apes, owls, mackaws [macaws] might be chosen as Kien Long’s presents for the British king. Except for adding an exotic, or a ridiculed chinoiserie, element to the narrative, the association of China with wild animals also more or less implies that Macartney’s trip to China is a journey to a less civilized world.

<sup>28</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 16-17.

monarch for their avarice. On hearing the demands of Macartney, the Chinese Emperor orders to give the impudent British visitors a good bastinado for their undue demands. Macartney's pride and high expectation are consequently replaced by disappointment and humiliation. Wolcot pictures Macartney's dismay as follows:

In short, behold with dread MACARTNEY stare;  
Behold him seiz'd, his seat of honour bare;  
The bamboo sounds—alas! No voice of Fame:  
Stripp'd, schoolboy-like, and now I see his Train,  
I see their lily bottoms writhe with pain,  
And, like his LORDSHIP'S, blush with blood and shame.<sup>29</sup>

On top of the whipping, the Emperor also plays a trick on the British embassy by placing fools-caps on "all the poor degraded men," telling them "'Tis thus we Kings of China *folly* pay; Now, children, ye may all go home agen."<sup>30</sup> Unlike the timid Kien Long of the former poem, he is depicted as a monarch of certain authority and determination in this poem. Not a single trace of timorousness can be detected in him as he receives the British embassy. However, on the other hand, Kien Long's cruel and impolite treatment of the British embassy seems to imply that he is a rude and ruthless eastern monarch who shows no respect for representatives of other monarchs. This image of Chinese emperor as a discourteous and vicious monarch was later depicted again in his *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China*, published around twenty five years later.

### **B. Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China**

In the same year as he published his *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship*, Wolcot published another work related to China, which is

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<sup>29</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 18.

<sup>30</sup> Pindar, *Lyric Epistles* 73, 75-76.

entitled *Odes to Kien Long, The Present Emperor of China*. There are one letter, “To the Emperor of China,” and five odes in total in this collection of odes. In the opening paragraph of the letter, Wolcot calls Kien Long “the *second* POTENTATE upon earth,” and ridicules King George III for claiming himself the first potentate who never wrote a single line of verse. Then the poet mentions two poems written by Kien Long and praises Kien Long’s literary genius as a poet. This reference to Kien Long’s poems suggests that it is through reading Kien Long’s verses that Wolcot comes to picture his favourable image of this eastern monarch.<sup>31</sup> Admiring Kien Long’s aptitude for poetry, Wolcot suggests that, in addition to opening commercial relationships between Britain and China, literary exchange between them should also be launched. His reason for this is because Kien Long is “a man of rhymes,” “[a] genius of uncommon versatility,” “an enthusiast to the Muses,” “a lover of novelty” and ironically “an idolater of Royalty,” which characteristics that Wolcot declares can also be found in him. At the end of the letter, Wolcot even calls himself “Thy humble Servant and brother Poet”<sup>32</sup> to show how affirmatively he would like to identify himself with Kien Long. Hence, using Kien Long as an “Other” to satirize George III’s want of poetic interest or gift, Wolcot’s image of Kien Long is comparatively affirmative. He is not only a wise and able monarch of a great country, but also a talented man of letters. This idealized image of Kien Long therefore reflects the poet’s disappointment and dissatisfaction in his own king, George III.

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<sup>31</sup> Some of Kien Long’s poems were translated into French by a Jesuit named Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718-1793), who served in the court of Peking for forty four years, 1750-1793. The title of Amiot’s book is *Éloge de la ville de Moukden* and it is published in Paris in 1770. This book is highly regarded by Voltaire, in whose *Lettres Chinoises, Indiennes, et Tartares* (1776) Kien Long’s poetic talent and works were also noted in detail. See Voltaire, *Lettres Chinoises, Indiennes, et Tartares* (Londres, 1776) 44, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 21 Oct. 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>. It is possible that Wolcot might have either consulted Amiot’s or Voltaire’s work to construct his own image of Kien Long and the Chinese.

<sup>32</sup> Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China* (Dublin, 1792) 3, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 25 May 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

In Ode I and II, Wolcot continues his panegyric upon Kien Long, whom he now praises as “the first of Eastern Kings,” “PRINCE of POETS” and “noble BARD” for the sovereign’s poetic talent and then mocks western kings again for their lack of literary taste. Considering Kien Long’s greatness, the poet remarks that “THOU art a second Atlas, great Kien Long; / Supporting half th’ unwieldy globe, so strong;” (II, 1-2). By contrast, he ironically scoffs at Britain and the British King that

And yet I hate a Fool upon a throne—  
 We have been happy hitherto, thank God;  
 How boys would burst with laughter, ev’ry one,  
 Were *monkey-schoolmasters* to hold the *rod!*<sup>33</sup>

Satirizing his own country as a place being in the powers of a group of “monkey-schoolmasters” and suggesting that China is relatively ruled by a competent monarch, Wolcot shows his disappointment in the British government.

In Ode III, the poet first applauds Kien Long for not attempting to make a fortune out of his subjects, which is notwithstanding practiced by a western king. He commends Kien Long on his farsightedness and kindness and says

Thy mind was form’d upon an ampler scale:  
 Each thought is generosity—a whale:  
 Not a poor sprat to dunghills to be hurl’d—  
 Thy soul a dome illum’d by GRANDEUR’s rays,  
 That o’er thy mighty empire casts a blaze;  
 A beacon to inform a world.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to his plaudits for Kien Long, Wolcot mocks the poverty and the rakish

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<sup>33</sup> Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long* 7.

<sup>34</sup> Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long* 14.

life of the British king in a paradoxical and sarcastic way. On the surface, the poet seems to reproach Kien Long for taking pleasure in games; nevertheless, his narrative turns out to be an ironic criticism on George III, who has indulged himself in games, led an impoverished life, and paid little attention to the poor living conditions of his subjects.

In Ode IV, Wolcot continues his attack on different cases of social injustice and suggests that social injustice is a common phenomenon both in Europe and Asia. He humorously invites Kien Long to visit Europe to learn from the European monarchs how to make himself rich. The poet even proposes that if Kien Long wishes to make himself rich, he has to stop giving his personal money away to earn more fame, turn a deaf ear to his subjects' poverty and suffering, and find himself a good minister who can squeeze money out of the pockets of the citizens. He advises Kien Long that:

Pr'ythee, to Europe come, Kien Long, with speed:  
We'll give thee much instruction on this head;  
Nay, *some examples* also shall be brought,  
Which beats a cold dry precept all to nought.

PRECEPT'S a pigmy, hectick, weak, and flight;  
EXAMPLE is a giant in his might.  
Then, pr'ythee, to our EUROPE haste to stare;  
Lo, EUROPE shall produce thee *such a Pair!*  
A PAIR! To whom lean AV'RICE is a fool,  
And means to take a lesson from *their school*.<sup>35</sup>

In this ironic passage Wolcot reveals his antipathy for wealthy but unkind monarchs, as typified by the European monarchs. Whereas Kien Long is depicted as a naive eastern monarch who has not yet mastered the means of squeezing the people "nigh

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<sup>35</sup> Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long* 17.



to death” like the western kings. In this ironic narrative on the avarice and unkindness of the western kings, Kien Long is again idealistically pictured as an wise and able monarch for the purpose of mocking the western kings who practice social evils.

In Ode V, Wolcot ridicules the business purpose of the British government in dispatching an embassy to China. He humorously asks Kien Long to be generous to the British embassy, who will bring him some domestic fowls from the farm of the king and queen in exchange for precious treasure. On the avarice of the British government and monarch, Wolcot suggests

Lord! Couldst thou send the Chinese Empire o’er,  
So hungry, we should gape for *more*:  
Yes, couldst thou pack the Chinese Empire up,  
We’d make no more on’t than a China cup;  
Ev’n then My LADY SCHWELLENBERG would bawl,  
“*Gote dem de shabby fella—vat, dis all?*”

Whales very rarely make a hearty meal—  
Thus Princes an eternal hunger feel;  
Moreover, fond of good things *gratis*;  
Whole stomach’s motto should be, *nunquam satis*.<sup>36</sup>

Implying that the appetite of the British government and monarch is seldom satisfied and their hunger for Chinese treasure endless, Wolcot suggests that all the treasure of China treasure will probably be nibbled away by the covetous British government eventually. This predication, to a certain degree, corresponds to Wolcot’s early prediction in his *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and his Ship*. The sallow and defenceless Chinese are no match for the well-equipped British troops and the wealthy Chinese Empire would be easy prey if the British government

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<sup>36</sup> Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long* 20.

decided to launch a military force to invade China.

### C. “Ode to the Lion Ship of War, on Her Return with the Embassy from China”

Soon after Macartney’s embassy came back to Britain from their disappointing journey to China,<sup>37</sup> Wolcot wrote another satire, “Ode to the Lion Ship of War, on Her Return with the Embassy from China,”<sup>38</sup> to mock the prophetic failure of this embassy<sup>39</sup> and to reproach the Chinese for not receiving the British embassy with appropriate etiquette. As in his former works about the Macartney embassy, he sarcastically criticised the avarice, folly and vanity of George III and his courtiers, who were so naïve as to believe that China would, like India, yield to the British throne.

However, though the poet did not agree with the British government’s motivation to send Macartney to visit China, neither did he approve of the way the Macartney embassy was treated by the Chinese government. He ridiculed the difference in the personality of the eastern and western monarchs by suggesting that:

Ah me! ’tis universally allow’d  
That Eastern Monarchs are prodigious proud;  
Unlike the *humble* Monarchs of the *West*—  
Such kind and pliable and gentle creatures!  
So placid, of their souls, and sweet, the features;

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<sup>37</sup> In terms of its political objective, the Macartney embassy is a complete failure. However, since it has a chance to travel along the long east coast of the empire, visit many inland cities, and obtain much valuable first-hand information about the eastern empire, its achievement in helping the British to know the Chinese is significant.

<sup>38</sup> This poem is collected in his *Pindariana, or Peter’s Portfolio* (London, 1794-95). Though the title pages of both London and Philadelphia editions suggest the book is published in 1794, parts 10-31 are actually published in 1795. It explains why the poet has cited from Aeneas Anderson’s *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China, in the years 1792, 1793, and 1794*, first appeared in 1795, to support his arguments.

<sup>39</sup> In his ode “To the Ship,” Wolcot pessimistically predicts that Macartney’s embassy is unlikely to make a successful trip to China and the British envoy are very likely to experience an embarrassing treatment by the Chinese authority, such as being whipped or forced to wear fool’s-caps. See his *Lyric Epistles* 59-76.

Where nought but VIRTUE is a welcome guest.<sup>40</sup>

This image of Kien Long as a arrogant monarch is new to Wolcot as he tends to depict him as an ideal monarch to mirror the foolish and faults of George III in his earlier works. He bitterly adds that

Your Eastern Despots, in their lofty station,  
Expect the censer of rich adulation  
To burn for ever underneath their noses:  
This incense boasts a certain opiate pow'r:  
Whose pleasant, stupefying, plenteous show'r,  
The optics of the understanding closes;

Producing, too, a charming gaudy dream,  
In which Kings think they hold the world's esteem;  
Think, too, the conscience should, though full of holes,  
And virtues, thick as herrings, in their souls.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to the humbleness, kindness, pliability, gentleness of western monarchs, Wolcot suggested that arrogance, loftiness, enjoying the company of adulators and being ignorant of the other world were common characteristics of all Eastern monarchs, as typified by Kien Long. The earlier positive images of Kien Long are completely disposed by the poet after he comes to know the undue treatment that the Macartney embassy had experienced. He replaces them with a new set of negative images to transfigure his former idol. By doing so, he not only, psychologically, retaliates the humiliation forced upon the British throne by the Chinese, the "Other;" but also establishes his own discourse about the contact between the east and the

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<sup>40</sup> Pindar, *Pindariana* 225, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 28 May 2006 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>.

<sup>41</sup> Pindar, *Pinduriana* 226.

west, in which he views as a contact between the barbarous tribes and the civilized nations. In his model of the communication between the east and the west, the former is collectively stereotyped as a savage race; while the latter, by contrast, a civilized one. His narrative then justified the reason why the British embassy was doomed to suffer the humiliation by an east monarch.

Though this mock-heroic satire was mainly written to ridicule the doomed failure of the Macartney embassy as well as the greed and wishful thinking of the British government and monarch, the poet has also obliquely expressed his discrimination and prejudice against the eastern civilization as a whole. As Robert L. Vales has commented on Wolcot's other poem of a similar nature, when the poet jibed at the folly of the British government and monarch, his British nationalism and patriotism tended to creep into the lines.<sup>42</sup>

#### ***D. A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China; on His***

##### ***Uncourtly and Impolitic Behavior to the Sublime Ambassadors of Great Britain***

Twenty two years after the Macartney embassy came back to London, another British embassy, led by William Pitt Amherst (1773-1857), set sail for China in February 1816, and arrived in Canton in July. Far worse than what the Macartney's embassy had experienced before, the Amherst embassy was asked to leave the capital even before the ambassador was able to present the letter from the Prince Regent (later George IV) to Emperor Jiaqing.<sup>43</sup>

In 1817, two years before he died, Wolcot used his real name for the first time

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<sup>42</sup> See Vales, *Peter Pindar* 161.

<sup>43</sup> It was due to a dispute over the Chinese protocol, the performance of kowtow, that Amherst did not have a chance to meet Emperor Jiaqing and submit his credential to the throne. His embassy was deported within 24 hours after they arrived in Peking. For more information about the Amherst embassy, see William Woodville Rockhill, *Diplomatic Audiences at the Court of China* (London: Luzac, 1905) 34-38; W. Travis Hanes III and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2002) 23-24.

to write a satire, *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China; on His Uncourtly and Impolitic Behaviour to the Sublime Ambassadors of Great Britain*, to ridicule this deplorable embassy.<sup>44</sup> On the title page Wolcot indicated that the intention of the work was “[t]o scourge a Monarch of the East, / For mocking Monarchs of the West, / A Lord of Britain, and advent’rous Knight.” In the poem he also implied that the poem is partly evoked by his patriotism. He says

Insulted by a Chinese crew,  
Thou knowest what ONE ship dar’d do,  
Which, blazing, seem’d to emulate ALGIERS;  
Which, for Old ENGLAND’s glory fir’d,  
Blew, with a patriot rage inspir’d,  
Walls, guns, and lanterns, all about their ears.<sup>45</sup>

The passage cited above indicates that there is a strong element of patriotism woven into the lines. It is mainly the poor treatment of the Amherst embassy in China that triggers the poet’s indignation against the Chinese and consequently makes him change his images of the Chinese completely.

The poet starts his poem by condemning the Chinese emperor for proudly asking Lord Amherst to perform a kowtow, knocking one’s head against the ground nine times, to Lord Amherst this “sad Prostration” would degrade the national dignity of the British throne. He then questioned Kien Long about the legitimacy of expelling the British embassy from Peking and suggested that the visitors were not well received in China. He says

Inform me what their crying sin,

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<sup>44</sup> The publisher put “*Olim* Peter Pindar, Esq.” after the name Dr. John Wolcot to indicate that Peter Pindar is actually a pen-name of Wolcot.

<sup>45</sup> John Wolcot, *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China on his Uncourtly and Impolitic Behaviour to the Sublime Ambassadors* (London, 1817) 18.

That thou should banish them PEKIN?—  
 For mercy's sake, I hope thou didst not strip 'em,  
 Expose them to a grinning mob—  
 (For such had been a horrid job)—  
 And for its merriment like culprits whip 'em!<sup>46</sup>

Considering the unjust treatment the Amherst embassy received in China, the poet warns that the incident might impair British people's frenzy for chinoiserie. However, this warning turns out to be an irony because the poet showed no favourable impression for chinoiserie at all. Wolcot thought chinoiserie, such as the oriental layouts of gardens, the Chinese style of furniture and music, had not only downgraded the artistic taste of the British but also the European standards of beauty in general. Regarding the physiognomic features of the Chinese, he ironically ridiculed that the colour of the Chinese people's skin as "*dirty brown*," their teeth as "*black as blackest jet*,"<sup>47</sup> and the bosom of the Chinese ladies as "*tann'd leather*." Besides, he mocked the small feet of the Chinese ladies as "*nice appendage to the leg[s]*" and "*a splendid cripple*." Wolcot also ridiculed British men for losing their masculinity of "John Bull" and turning themselves into "Miss Molly" because they copy the Chinese men and pull out their beards.<sup>48</sup> He even suggested that the Chinese males are feminine in appearance. Hence, what Wolcot has negated about the Chinese is not only their culture and civilisation, but also their anthropological characteristics.

Suggesting that the British national dignity was damaged by the Chinese court, the poet implied that the Chinese government might have to pay a dear price for

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<sup>46</sup> Wolcot, *Epistle to the Emperor of China* 6.

<sup>47</sup> The idea of mocking the Chinese ladies of having black teeth is possibly borrowed from Oliver Goldsmith, in whose *Citizen of the World* (1762) the Chinese ladies are depicted as having black teeth for the first time in English literature.

<sup>48</sup> Herbert Allen Giles noted that the Chinese men normally do not wear beards before they reach the age of forty, unless they have a married son. See his *China and the Chinese* (New York: Columbia UP, 1902) 177.

treating the British embassy uncourtly. First, he suggested that the Chinese were arrogant and ignorant as not to know how big the real world is. He remarks that:

Thou never didst vouchsafe, perhaps,  
To cast thine eye sublime on Maps;  
And therefore, fancying thyself all-mighty,  
Hast treated us with pompous scorn—  
Beneath thy notice—beggars born—  
No better than the folks of Otaheite!<sup>49</sup>

This passage suggests that the arrogance of the Chinese is resulting from their ignorance of the world outside their boundaries. By suggesting that the Chinese are as primitive and uncivilized as the Otaheite, the citizens of Tahiti, Wolcot therefore justified the reason why the Chinese did not treat the British embassy in a courtly and wisely manner. As for the price that the Chinese might have to pay for their pompous behaviour, the poet suggested that:

Know, should Old ENGLAND'S Genius frown,  
Her thunder soon would shake thy crown,  
Reduce thee from an eagle to a wren;  
Thine high Imperial pride to gall,  
Force thee to leap the *Chinese* wall,  
To feed on horse with *Tartar* tribes again.<sup>50</sup>

This passage clearly reveals the militarist's attitude of the poet, who thought that the Chinese would only recognize the superiority of the British when they realize the power of the British military.

With regards to the representations of the "Other" and the "Self," it is obvious

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<sup>49</sup> Wolcot, *Epistle to the Emperor of China* 17.

<sup>50</sup> Wolcot, *Epistle to the Emperor of China* 17.

that the poet dichotomized the Chinese and the British and favoured the latter for his ethnocentrism and patriotism. The Chinese are depicted as unattractive in their physiognomies, degenerating in their taste for arts, arrogant and contemptuous in their behaviours, and poor in their knowledge of the world. The Chinese men are depicted as effeminate and feeble, while Emperor Kia King [Jiaqing] as a pompous and unwise despot. In contrast to the negative images of the Chinese, the British are pictured as attractive and natural in their features, powerful and superior in their military force, and rich in their understanding of the world. Furthermore, British men are depicted as more masculine and the citizens of Britain more civilized.

### E. Summary

Examining Wolcot's poetry about China as a whole, we can see a dramatic transformation of his images of China and the Chinese over the years. In his early poems about China, such as *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship* and *Odes to Kien Long*, he presented a favourable image of the Chinese emperor Kien Long, whom the poet pictured as "a man of rhymes," "a genius of uncommon versatility," and with whom he would like to identify himself. By picturing Kien Long as an idealized monarch Wolcot sarcastically ridiculed George III and other western kings' intemperate life style and their lack of poetic inclinations and talents. The poet also uses many ironies to mock and satirise the social evils and injustice of Britain in these early works, which therefore implies that China is a better place for people to reside.

However, as the relationship between China and Britain worsened after the two unsuccessful visits made by the British government in 1793 and 1816, the poet never presents the Chinese positively in his works again. Considering the historical context of this change in his perception, Wolcot's disillusion of China is actually in



accordance with the main impressions of many contemporary British intellectuals. Ever since the British acquired more information about the cultural and scientific developments of the Chinese in the late eighteenth century, particularly thanks to those travel accounts left by George Anson, Aeneas Anderson, George Leonard Staunton (1737-1801)<sup>51</sup> and John Barrow (1764-1848),<sup>52</sup> British intellectuals tended to believe that China was nothing but a backward and stagnant eastern empire. Hence, catalyzed by his ethnocentrism, militarism and patriotism, Wolcot suggested that Britain is entitled to teach the arrogant, ignorant, and uncivilized Chinese a lesson by her strong force. His former utopian image of China was discarded and a new negative discourse about China was established by the poet in order to prove the superiority of his own country. Therefore, this change of images of China not only reflects the changes of the corresponding historical circumstances, but also the poet's personal attitudes towards the object in question.

### III. Thomas De Quincey's images of China and the Chinese

#### A. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*

Among the nineteenth century British writers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1722-1834) and Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) publicly admitted they were opium addicts. The former suggested that his unfinished poem "Kubla Khan, or, a Vision in a Dream: A Fragment" (1816) was written in a hallucinatory state of mind

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<sup>51</sup> George Leonard Staunton was the principal secretary to Macartney's embassy. His *An authentic account of an embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China : including cursory observations made, and information obtained, in travelling through that ancient empire, and a small part of Chinese Tartary*, published in 1797, is the only official version of the journey. Though a number of positive characteristics of the Chinese are observed by the author, the comprehensive image of the Chinese presented in this book is rather negative.

<sup>52</sup> John Barrow was the controller of the household of Macartney's embassy. He published his itinerary of this journey *Travels in China: Containing Descriptions, Observations and Comparisons Made and Collected in the Course of a Short Residence at the Imperial Palace of Yuen-min-yuen, and on a Subsequent Journey from Peking to Canton* in 1804. The book covers many aspects of the life of the Chinese and the author's overall evaluation of them tends to be negative.

after he consumed opium; while the latter published a series of articles, which were later collected and printed as a book called *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822),<sup>53</sup> that describes various physical and psychological pains after consuming opium. Both writers allude to China, or an imagined China, in their works; however, the images attributed to this exotic land were completely different. Coleridge adapted the fairytale and positive images of China from Marco Polo's *Travels*<sup>54</sup> to depict the grandeur of Kubla Khan's palace in Xanadu, but in De Quincey's *Confessions*, China is a wasteland, a place he would never like to visit.

Before De Quincey published his *Confessions*, he had been regularly consuming opium for eighteen years.<sup>55</sup> In a chapter called "Introduction to the Pains of Opium," he relates a nightmare about meeting a Malay, who turns out to be the poet's symbolic embodiment of Asia and the whole Orient. The scene that the Malay meets the writer's British servant is dramatized as a confrontation between the Orient and the West. The narrator says that when his lady servant stood face to face with the Malay at the doorway, "there seemed to be an impassable gulf fixed between all communication of ideas." Then he describes the Malay as a "demon" and "tiger-cat" because of his Asiatic dress, and notes that:

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<sup>53</sup> Some extracts of De Quincey's *Confessions* was first published in *London Magazine* in September and October of 1821. The articles was then collected and published in one volume duodecimo by Taylor and Hessey in 1822. See Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, 1821-1856*, ed. Grevel Lindop (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000) 2-7.

<sup>54</sup> In a note published prior to the poem Coleridge mentioned that he was reading Samuel Purchas's *Purchas's Pilgrimage* (1613) before he composed the poem. Polo's *Travels* was collected in *Purchas's Pilgrimage* and it was likely from where Coleridge got his imagination about Kubla Khan and his palace. See Ge, *Wu wai de wan ying* 234-36.

<sup>55</sup> De Quincey's first taste of opium was in 1804, when he was a student of Worcester College, Oxford. See Grevel Lindop, "Quincey, Thomas Penson De (1785-1859)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 10 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7524>>. Besides, two of De Quincey's uncles, who were brothers of De Quincey's mother, used to serve in the British army in India, one of the main places of opium production dominated by the British East India Company. De Quincey had a number of discussions with one of his uncles and both agreed that the opium business plays a key role in securing Britain's benefit in India. See Ge, *Wu wai de wan ying* 299-300. In his "The Opium Question with China in 1840," De Quincey also reminded his readers that opium business will contribute 3 millions of sterling per annum to support Britain's vast Indian establishment. See De Quincey, *Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. 14, 167.

And a more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures, and adorations.<sup>56</sup>

He adds that the appearance of the Malay is “ferocious” and his eyes “fiery,” which startles a little child from a neighbouring cottage, who then stands close to the servant for protection. At this meeting, the Malay is depicted as a low and degrading figure to serve as a contrast to the noble British servant.

When De Quincey comes to meet the Malay in person, he cites a line from Homer’s *Iliad* to greet the visitor. The reason for him to cite from Homer is simply because he thinks Greek is geographically nearest to an Oriental country in terms of its longitude. Assuming that his visitor must be very familiar with opium and to show his hospitality, De Quincey gives the Malay a piece of opium, which quantity is large enough to kill three dragoons and their horses. To his astonishment, the Malay devours the opium only in one mouthful. Worried that the Malay might lose his life by overdosing on opium, De Quincey feels uneasy for a couple of days. He is later relieved because there was no report about any death of a Malay. Regarded as a representative of the Oriental peoples, the Malay is arbitrarily associated with opium by De Quincey and depicted as an abnormal creature because he does not die for consuming a dose of opium which no European is likely to survive.

As a whole, the Malay is repeatedly depicted as an opposite to the Europeans, represented by the servant and her master. They are different from the Malay in

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<sup>56</sup> De Quincey, *Confessions* 57.

every aspect and there is even no possibility for the former and the later to have a rational communication. However, De Quincey does not give any explanation to justify his assumption, but simply takes it as a universal truth, which is ironically based upon his imagination, rather than personal experience. Regarding this subjective classification of ethnic characters, Edward Said notes:

Rather than listing all the figures of speech associated with the Orient—its strangeness, its difference, its exotic sensuousness, and so forth—we can generalize about them as they were handed down through the Renaissance. They are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not. For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula *is*.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, the ethnic character that De Quincey attributed to the Malay and the Europeans are nothing but a display of his prejudice against the Orient. What we may perceive from this incident is not only the author's Euro-centrism, but also his ethnic prejudice against the non-Europeans, particularly the peoples from the Orient.

In the following section called "The Pains of Opium" of *Confessions*, De Quincey notes his first image of China. Haunted by the horrific image of the Malay, he suggests that:

The Malay had been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes. I know not whether others share in my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, and among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Said, *Orientalism* 72.

The reason why he thought living in China would drive him mad was mainly because of what the country signified to him. He said “[a] young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed,” adding that “south Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life; the great *officina gentium* [workshop of peoples]. Man is a weed in those regions.”<sup>59</sup> As China was one of the oldest countries in Asia and many of her practices were borrowed by other countries around her, De Quincey focuses on China and suggests

In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, and by the barrier of utter abhorrence, and want of sympathy, placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyze. I could sooner live with lunatics, or brute animals.<sup>60</sup>

Suggesting that he would rather live with lunatics or animals than with the Chinese or other Asians, De Quincey has constructed a set of negative images of the Orient here. Hence, as a relative contrast to the Europeans, the status and value of the Chinese and other Asians is degraded. The citizens of the Asian countries are arbitrarily generalized and then defined as inferior or uncivilized peoples.

As China is grotesquely transformed in the nightmare of De Quincey, he then indiscriminately associates it with anything horrifying:

Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sun-light, I

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<sup>58</sup> De Quincey, *Confessions* 70. In one of his poems, “Locksley Hall,” Alfred Tennyson writes “Thro’ the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger days: / Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay” (83-84). Here Tennyson suggests that he would rather have a shorter life in Europe than enjoying longevity in China. See Alfred Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson: Poems of 1842*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Collins, 1968) 184. Though their reasons for preferring to stay in Europe are different, both writers have suggested that China was not a good place to maintain or develop one’s mentality.

<sup>59</sup> De Quincey, *Confessions* 70.

<sup>60</sup> De Quincey, *Confessions* 70-71.

brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Indostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas: and was fixed, for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. . . I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids.<sup>61</sup>

In this passage China is depicted by De Quincey as a backward, primitive, stagnant and uncivilized country; while the Chinese are barbarous, brutal, hypocritical, inhumane, irrational and unsympathetic.

#### **B. “The Opium Question with China in 1840”**

In June 1840 De Quincey published an article called “The Opium Question with China in 1840” in *Blackwood Magazine* to show his support for the Palmerston government in deciding to declare war on the Chinese in 1839. In this article he argues that the government should continue the war in Canton, though there were still some people in Britain questioning the legitimacy of waging a war for the cause of the opium business. In order to justify his pro-war assertion, De Quincey launched a fierce attack on the Chinese government and the people of China. He tried to convince his fellow countrymen that what really mattered in this war were not only the commercial profits and rights of the British merchants in Canton, but also the national dignity and honour of Britain as the most powerful country in the world.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> De Quincey, *Confessions* 71.

<sup>62</sup> De Quincey summarized the reasons for launching a war against China as follow: “winning honour for the name of Britain, winning a secure settlement planted in law and self-respect for our establishments in China, for ever taking away from British merchants all temptations to co-operate in legal murder, for ever guaranteeing our own brothers and sisters from liability to torture.” See De

The article adopts a dual strategy to repudiate the Chinese government's highhanded policy of stopping opium business on the one hand, and to justify the British government's decision of waging a war against China on the other hand. De Quincey dodges the moral issue of smuggling opium to China and persuades his readers that the British opium-dealers are simply innocent suppliers of a luxurious Chinese habit. He then argues that from economic, military, diplomatic, political, religious and even national perspectives why the war will bring not harm but benefit to Britain. In this article, his imperial ideology and racial superiority are unreservedly revealed between the lines. The author refers to George Anson (1697-1762), George Macartney (1737-1806), William Pitt Amherst (1773-1857) and emphasizes how they were badly treated by the Chinese and how the British name was tarnished by the Chinese officials, we may therefore get a clue about the inter-textual link between his works and those of Anson and members of the Macartney and the Amherst embassies.

As in his *Confessions*, China and the Chinese are once again depicted as two extreme opposite "Others" in this article to contrast with the favourable images of Britain and the British. De Quincey uses terms like "accursed," "arrogant," "backward," "cruel," "defenseless," "degenerating," "demoralized," "foolish," "inactive," "insolent," "ignorant," "immoral," "inorganic," "lifeless," "monstrous," "stagnant," "unreasonable" and "wicked" to describe China, which looks like "a kingdom almost belonging to another planet."<sup>63</sup> In contrast to the negative images of China, he claims that Britain is an "active," "advanced," "gallant," "generous," "moral," "noble," "rational" and "powerful" state, which has the right to liberate China from her pitiful situation at all costs, even if a military action had to be

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Quincey, *Collected Writings* 203.

<sup>63</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 179.

taken.<sup>64</sup> He gives several examples to imply that his observation of China both correct and fair. For instance, he criticizes the arrogance of the Chinese emperor:

A sovereign who affects to make a footstool of the terraqueous globe, and to view all foreigners as barbarians, could not be approached with advantage by a body of manly Englishmen...Such a prince could be propitiated only by the Eastern style of servile prostration; and, were this style even steadily adopted, under the infinite caprice of absolute despots it would but the more certainly court the vilest occasional outrages.<sup>65</sup>

Accusing the Chinese emperor being an arrogant and despotic sovereign, De Quincey therefore reinforces the negative image of a Chinese emperor as an insolent dictator, as noted in the official reports by members of the Macartney and the Amherst embassies years ago. In order to stir his readers' antipathy against the Chinese emperor, he adds "Had Lord Amherst submitted to such a degradation [*kotou*], the next thing would have been a requisition from the British Factory of beautiful British women, according to a fixed description, as annual presents to the Emperor." De Quincey suggests here that submitting to the arrogance of the Chinese emperor might not only hurt the national pride of Britain, but also lead to an ethnic degradation of Britain.

As for the stagnancy of the Chinese empire, he uses the developments of law and science in China as examples to justify his opinion: "[t]he same scenes are eternally impending. The Chinese laws do not change. It is the very expression of their improgressive state that they cannot. Centuries make no reforms in a land

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<sup>64</sup> De Quincey said "It is now certain that we must have some sort of military expedition against China. . .A column of 14,000 men, with a suitable train of artillery. . .would easily march to Peking, if landed at the nearest point." Besides, he also suggested that the British troops should seize the island of Formosa [Taiwan] and Canton as their bases for further economic and military operations. See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 177, 195.

<sup>65</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 184.



open to no light,”<sup>66</sup> adding that the laws of the Chinese are something “monstrous” and “unnatural.”<sup>67</sup> What De Quincey reveals in this remark is actually a cultural hegemony of western discourse about the Orient. He seems to consider himself a British expert on Chinese laws and his statement an authoritative and objective observation. Nevertheless, if we examine his discourse carefully, we shall find that what he claimed to be the *status quo* of Chinese laws is indeed nothing but one of the juridical principles of Chinese laws—a life for a life, which was likely also perceivable in the British laws. Therefore, it is rather his personal prejudice dualism than an empirical observation that makes him to negate the nature of Chinese laws completely.

To further emphasize the stagnant condition that China was in, De Quincey uses his own country as a positive reference and argues that:

A popular Review has pronounced recently an apotheosis of China,—finding out that she is distinguished for her skill in the arts (but obscure *mechanic* arts), and that she was so when our ancestors lived in the forests of Germany. True; and no fact could better have measured the difference between us. The Review takes a retrospect of 1500 years. We British have traversed the whole distance from savage life to the summit of civilization. China, starting with such advantages, has yet to learn even the elements of law and justice, without counting on doubtful advantages.<sup>68</sup>

What De Quincey shows his readers here is a popular nineteenth century British view of China. This old Oriental country might be a great one centuries ago, however in comparison to Britain, which has achieved tremendous achievements in science and social reforms within a shorter time, the former is nothing but an

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<sup>66</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 189.

<sup>67</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 191.

<sup>68</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 204-05.

stagnant and weak country. The Orient, as an “Other” to the Occident, becomes a horrific, yet living reminder, to keep Europeans vigilant about the evolution of history. Hence, in the eyes of De Quincey, China is a barren land, where arrogance and ignorance have prevented her from enjoying the benefits of modern European civilization.

When De Quincey describes the Chinese character, he repeatedly uses words like “arrogant,” “barbarous,” “bestial,” “brutal,” “capricious,” “cruel,” “horrible,” “ignoble,” “jealous,” “savage,” “stupid” and “tyrannical”<sup>69</sup> to depict them. In his description about the 1785 accident, in which a Portuguese sailor killed a Chinese citizen by firing a gun at the command of his British commanding officers, he calls the Chinese officers who demanded the British to turn in the murderer “Canton devils and fools.”<sup>70</sup> In contrast to the negative characteristics of the Chinese, De Quincey uses positive terms like “brave,” “civil,” “civilized,” “gallant,” “generous,” “gentle,” “innocent,” “intelligent,” “noble” and “moral” to describe the characters of his fellow countrymen. These images of the Chinese and the British are constructed on an us/other dualism, which can be further sub-categorized into pairs of opposites like Europe/Orient, brave/timid, civilized/barbarous, humane/inhumane, powerful/weak, moral/immoral, and etc. This arbitrary classification, to a certain degree, reveals the hegemonism and racialism of the narrator.

Nevertheless, there are two exceptions that do not match the classification

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<sup>69</sup> De Quincey had some experience of translating Kant’s works into English. In one translation, “Kant on National Character, in Relation to the Sense of the Sublime and Beautiful, a Translation,” published in the *London Magazine* for April 1824, with the signature, “X. Y. Z.” De Quincey rendered one passage as follow: “What senseless fooleries are involved in the prolix and elaborate compliments of the *Chinese*! Even their paintings are senseless, and exhibit marvelous forms that are nowhere to be seen in nature. They have also, more than any people on earth besides, traditional fooleries that are consecrated by ancient usage; such for instance as the ceremony still retained at Peking, during an eclipse of the sun or the moon, of driving away the dragon that is attempting to swallow up those heavenly bodies,—a ceremony derived from the elder ages of grossest ignorance, and still retained in defiance of better information.” See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 46, 56. Kant’s negative images of the Chinese, like ignorant, foolish, senseless, anti-natural and superstitious, may likely to have influenced De Quincey’s impression of the Chinese.

<sup>70</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 187-89.

suggested here. One is De Quincey's description of the Hong merchants in Canton, who are praised as honest people.<sup>71</sup> Another is his condemnation of those British captains, who assured the Portuguese crewman that not a hair of his head would be touched by the hands of the Canton devils, but in the end, dishonestly and cowardly handed him over to the Chinese for execution. The reason why De Quincey was willing to attribute a compliment to the Hong merchants is probably because they were intermediators between the British merchants and the local Chinese governments and they consequently had contact with the civilized British people on a regular basis. Besides, it might also because some of them helped the British merchants to sell opium in China and therefore made the British government benefit from the opium business. It is possible that De Quincey wanted to use these two cases as examples to illustrate that his judgments of the Chinese and the British were based on an impartial perspective, rather than personal prejudice. However, readers are probably more likely to remember the negative images of the Chinese than these two exceptions.

De Quincey's reasons for making war against China were very similar to those of Daniel Defoe, who also encouraged the British government to declare war on China to force her to open its door to the British merchants and missionaries. Much of Defoe's criticism of China is reproduced in De Quincey's texts, so it seems reasonable to presume that De Quincey might have borrowed some negative images of China from his predecessor. Another interesting phenomenon in reading De Quincey's "The Opium Question with China in 1840" is his skill of rewriting China. For instance, he implies that Lin Zexu, the imperial commissioner who banned the opium trade, was actually an opium merchant and his motive for banning opium

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<sup>71</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 183-84.

smuggling in Canton was suspicious.<sup>72</sup> De Quincey says that “As having at length a rival interest of its own.—Lin and others are said to have some thousands of acres laid down as poppy plantations.”<sup>73</sup> By destroying the positive image of Lin, a senior Chinese official, De Quincey therefore also smears the collective image of all Chinese officials. He even goes so far as to suggest that Captain Elliot, the British superintendent who declined to hand out opium possessed by the British merchants and to cooperate with Lin, might conspire with Lin in order to help the latter to make a profit in dealing with the case.<sup>74</sup> These two examples illustrate that De Quincey was ready to distort facts at will as long as his proposal of continuing the war in China could be adopted and executed by the British government. As a matter of fact, De Quincey’s method of calumniating the images of the Chinese is actually not different to what the Chinese writers had done to the British during the Opium Wars. Both parties tried their best to stick pieces of goldleaf on themselves and paste mud on the other. In practice, just as what those patriotic Chinese writers did in their writings, De Quincey also dehumanized and demonized the Chinese:

The English navy might as reasonably throw bomb-shells into. . . the Kingdom of the Birds above us, as seek to make any deep impression upon such a vast callous hulk as the Chinese Empire. It is defended by its essential non-irritability, arising out of the intense non-development of its resources. Were it better developed, China would become an *organized* state, a *power* like Britain: at present it is an inorganic mass—something to be kicked, but which cannot kick again—having no commerce worth counting, no vast establishments of maritime industry, no arsenals, no shipbuilding towns. . . —in short, no vital parts, no organs, no heart, no lungs.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> It is unclear from where De Quincey gets this idea. However, it contradicted to most people’s image of Lin and it might have changed some readers’ opinion about the Chinese government’s legitimacy of banning the opium trade.

<sup>73</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 166.

<sup>74</sup> See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 169-72.

<sup>75</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 176.

Elsewhere he also suggested that the nature of the Chinese was “bestial,” their laws “monstrous,” their punishment “barbarous,” their morality “savage,” their manners and mechanic arts “semi-refined” and their country “incapable of a true civilisation.”<sup>76</sup> In contrast to these negative qualities of the “Other,” De Quincey describes his fellow countrymen as “active,” “brave,” “gentle,” “honourable” and “intelligent” people, and his country a “civil,” “generous,” “noble,” “highest-spirited” and “warlike” state, which has reached the summit of civilisation.<sup>77</sup> It is in the process of dehumanizing and demonizing China and the Chinese that De Quincey shaped a positive self-image of his own country and fellow countrymen.

### C. Summary

The previous discussion of De Quincey’s works suggests that he takes China and the Chinese as negative “Others.” The reasons why he smears the images of China and the Chinese comprehensively are in fact a result of a complicated psychological and social cognition, such as his patriotism, his imperialistic ideology, his sense of cultural and ethnical superiority and his personal experience of losing a son in the opium war. When he repudiated those earlier positive images of the Chinese, he simultaneously attributed a series of positive images to his own countrymen to suggest the absolute superiority of the latter. Due to the popularity of his works, it is very likely that De Quincey’s articles have widely influenced the public opinion of that time. It might also be reasonable to suggest that his works have more or less weakened the voice of the opposite party, launched by Algernon

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<sup>76</sup> De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 191-93.

<sup>77</sup> See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 177-78, 189, 192, 200, 204.

Sydney Thelwall (1795-1863) in the previous year to accuse the British opium merchants' immorality in promoting the war against the Chinese government.<sup>78</sup>

In October 1856, when De Quincey heard that a British ship *Lorcha* was seized by the Chinese government, his antipathy against China and the Chinese was aroused again.<sup>79</sup> In February and April 1857, he published two articles, both entitled "China," to launch another wave of hostile criticism against the Chinese government in an Edinburgh periodical called *Titan*. He collected them and republished them, with a preliminary note, a preface and other additions, as a separate pamphlet soon afterwards. He then published a third article on the same subject for *Titan* in July 1857.<sup>80</sup> The tone of these articles is similar to the one of his "The Opium Question with China in 1842" and most images of the Chinese are identical to the ones discussed above.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Thelwall is a clergyman of the Church of England. In 1839 he published *The Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China: being a Development of the Main Causes which Exclude the Merchants of Great Britain from the Advantages of an Unrestricted Commercial Intercourse with that Vast Empire*, in which he condemned the British opium merchants for selling opium to China and suggested that the traffic had brought "the greatest dishonour upon the British flag" and the business was a "wholesale murder" of the Chinese. He suggested that the Parliament should investigate the situation and encourage the British government to cooperate with the Chinese government to ban the business. He also suggested that the reason why the Chinese looked down upon the British was because a small number of British citizens were ruining the name of Britain in China, instead of the Chinese's congenital antipathy against foreigners. Due to the publication of this book and the increasing anti-war voice, there was a nationwide anti-opium movement in late 1839. See A. S. Thelwall, *The iniquities of the opium trade with China* (London, 1839) 2, 133-78; Ge, *Wu wai de wan ying* 300-01.

<sup>79</sup> In a note David Masson suggested that part of De Quincey's antipathy for China was possibly originated from the fact that one of his sons was killed in China in the first Opium War. See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 346.

<sup>80</sup> See De Quincey, *Collected Writings* 346.

<sup>81</sup> These articles can be found in De Quincey's *Collected Writings* 347-67.

## Chapter Eight

### China and the Chinese as a Positive “Other” in British Literature from the 1800s to the 1840s

#### I. China as a hybrid Other in British literature

As suggested in chapter seven the British images of the Chinese worsened dramatically in the eve of the first Opium War. As an enemy of Britain, China was depicted by many pro-war British writers as a backward, feeble and stagnant country, and her citizens as arrogant, ignorant and uncivilized. Pigtailed and bound-feet became two distinctive ethnical symbols of cultural degradation in many contemporary caricatures and pamphlets. Writers who supported the war blamed the Chinese government for destroying the property of British merchants and suggested that there was no better way other than war to make the Chinese government to recognize Britain as a political equal for once and for all. The morality of opium smuggling was carefully kept away from the discussion and emphasized instead that the war was a war between civilisation and barbarousness as well as justice and injustice.

Nevertheless, some writers did not see eye to eye with the supporters of the war. Their images of China and the Chinese still bore the idealistic elements of early Jesuits or other scholars who favoured China, such as Voltaire and Quesnay. Consequently, their representations of China tended to be more idealistic or romantic. In their works, China was often depicted as a better-governed land where there were fewer social evils and injustices, but commonly perceived in contemporary Britain. As they used China as an idealized Other to criticize the British society, they did not negate the culture of China as the pro-war writers did. Instead, they suggested that Britain may learn something positive from the largest empire in the east. Their images of foreign lands and peoples tended to show their interest in the cultural

achievements of Others, rather than their military strength. In this chapter we will see how China and the Chinese could be differently presented by two British writers from the 1800s to the 1840s.

## II. Thomas Carlyle's images of China and the Chinese

### A. Carlyle and his contemporary's general images of China and the Chinese

Of all British literati in the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) is one of the few writers who made positive comments on Chinese institutions and regulations.<sup>1</sup> If we take the tumultuous historical background of this era into consideration, particularly Macartney and Amherst's unsuccessful visits to China and those two opium wars, it will be easy to comprehend why there were not many British writers willing to picture China in a favourable light in the nineteenth century. Carlyle not only suggested that the British government should introduce China's civil examination into Britain to improve the quality of administration in the government,<sup>2</sup> but also showed his contempt for some British politicians' fallacious excuses of declaring a war against China in the second Opium War (1856-60).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, if we consider the contemporary social atmosphere of his time, especially after the breakout of the first Opium War and the prevailing anti-Chinese attitude after the scandalous "Arrow" incident in 1856, a prelude to the second Opium War,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Another one of the minority is Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). In comparison, the number of British writers who have presented China and the Chinese in a negative light in the nineteenth century seems far more greater. For example, George Gordon Byron (1785-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), Thomas De Quincy (1785-1859) and Charles Dickens (1837-1896) all have attributed various negative images to the Chinese and their country. See Ge, *Zhong ying wenxue guanxi biannian shi* 71-121.

<sup>2</sup> This idea of appointing talented intellectuals to be civil servants by their performances in civil examinations is also suggested by Carlyle's friend Walter Savage Landor in his "Imaginary Conversations between Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti" (1846).

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the British government's decision to declare a war against China, the Second Opium War, Carlyle said: "It's a sad thing when a man cannot respect the Government of his country." See David Alec Wilson, *Carlyle to Threescore-and-Ten* (London: Kegan Paul, 1929) 297.

<sup>4</sup> The fuse leading to the second Opium War (or Arrow War) was the "Arrow incident" in October of 1856, in which Chinese officials boarded a lorcha named *Arrow* and arrested some of its Chinese crew for conducting piracy and smuggling. Though this lorcha was commanded by a British Captain and



Carlyle's praise for Chinese customs and institutions were unlikely to please the ears of the majority of his own fellow countrymen.

Unlike Oliver Goldsmith or Walter Savage Landor, Carlyle does not use any Chinese character as his mouthpiece to criticise his own country. He alludes to China and her citizens mostly in his essays, such as *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), *Past and Present* (1843) and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850), rather than his fiction *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (1835). To examine the development of his images of the Chinese, I would like to discuss his references to China and the Chinese in a chronological order in following sections.

## B. References to China and the Chinese in *Sartor Resartus*

From about 19th September, 1830 to 20th October, 1830, Carlyle wrote several articles for *Fraser's magazine*, which were later collected and published

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flew a British flag, its registration had expired eight days earlier before the incident broke out and therefore it was no longer a British vessel any more. Despite the fact, Harry Smith Parkes, then acting British consul of Canton, and John Bowring, governor of Hong Kong, described this episode as an outrageous insult to British authority and requested Ye Mingshen, then governor of Canton, to apologize and to release the criminals immediately. Ye, worried the incident might lead to another military conflict between China and Britain, complied with the request and dispatched a representative to explain the legitimacy of the action, but refused to apologize for the action. Finding fault with the rank of the Chinese representative, Parkes and Bowring suggested to the British government that it should start another war with China and their suggestion was strongly supported by the prime minister Lord Palmerston. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of Parkes and Bowring's bombardment of Canton was severely criticized by several members of the House of Lords and the House of the Commons. For instance, Edward George Geoffrey Smith Stanley, then earl of Derby and later prime minister, James Howard Harris, then earl of Malmesbury, and Richard Cobden, a MP from West Riding, all questioned the rightfulness of the military action taken by Bowring. Cobden even proposed a motion of censure in the House of the Commons and denounced Bowring's bombardment as illegal. This act made Palmerston to accuse Cobden of being "anti-English." On hearing Palmerston's decision of starting a war against China, Carlyle immediately showed his disapproval of the decision and accused the British government of misleading its people. For further information about the cause and the subsequent development of the "Arrow Incident" as well as Carlyle's responses to British government's handling of the case, see Thomas Carlyle, *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, eds. Ian Campbell, vol. 32 (Durham: Duke UP, 2004) 97, 99, 199; Miles Taylor, "Cobden, Richard (1804–1865)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 20 April 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5741>>; Gerald Stone, "Bowring, Sir John (1792–1872)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 20 April 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3087>>; John Wells, "Parkes, Sir Harry Smith (1828–1885)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 20 April 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21353>>.

under the title *Thoughts on Clothes*.<sup>5</sup> Then, based upon the ideas embedded in *Thoughts and Clothes*, from 1833 to 1834 he published a number of extracts of his *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh*, in *Fraser's Magazine*, from volume VIII to volume X, which were later expanded and published as his first book in Boston in 1835.<sup>6</sup> In this work several customs, historical relics, and products from China are mentioned by the protagonist Professor Teufelsdröckh of Weissnichtwo, literally Professor of Things in General at the University of Nobody-knows-where.<sup>7</sup> In Chapter II of Book I, Teufelsdröckh sarcastically suggests that “at an epoch when puffery and quackery have reached a height unexampled in the annals of mankind, and even English Editors, like Chinese Shopkeepers, must write on their door-lintels *No Cheating here*, we thought it good to premise.”<sup>8</sup> While in Chapter VIII of Book II, Teufelsdröckh brags that:

‘I have read in most Public Libraries,’ says he, ‘including those of Constantinople and Samarcand: in most Colleges, except the Chinese Mandarin ones, I have studied, or seen that there was no studying. . . .’ ‘The great Wall of China I have seen; and can testify that it is of gray brick, coped and covered with granite, and shows only second-rate masonry.’<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere the professor mentions the “White Water-roses” rebellion<sup>10</sup> [also known as the White Lotus Rebellion, 1796-1804] and compares it to a secret political

<sup>5</sup> *Thoughts on Clothes* is the first book of *Sartor Resartus*. See Wilson, *Carlyle to “The French Revolution”*: 1826-1837 (London: Kegan Paul, 1924) 182-83.

<sup>6</sup> A collection of these extracts were first printed as a single volume in London by James Fraser in 1834, but only fifty copies were produced. In 1835, an American edition published in Boston and reprinted in 1837. Its first British edition was available in 1838, possibly due to a big success of his *The French Revolution* (1837). See Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (London: Chapman, 1838) 211-16; Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin*, 272; Fred Kaplan, “Carlyle, Thomas (1795–1881),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 21 April 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4697>>.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 213, 217.

<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 8.

<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 122.

<sup>10</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 123.

association called Carbonari, a private organization developed in Naples which aimed to establish a republican government in Italy during the French occupation (1796-1814). In addition to these remarks about China, Carlyle also mentions Chinese silks and China-ink,<sup>11</sup> but he does not expand on them. References to China and the Chinese *de facto* simply add an exotic flavour to the book.

### C. Early images of China and the Chinese in *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*

Carlyle's next reference to China appeared six years later. He mentions China and her people again in his *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*, a collection of six manuscripts which he used for his lectures in 1840 and published in 1841.<sup>12</sup> In lecture V, entitled "The Hero as Man of Letters: Johnson, Rousseau, Burns," delivered on 19<sup>th</sup> May, Carlyle praises the Chinese for devising civil examinations to grant talented intellectuals positions in government by proving their academic talents in a series of local and nationwide civil examinations. Carlyle gives a lengthy description of it:

By far the most interesting fact I hear about the Chinese is one on which we cannot arrive at clearness, but which excites endless curiosity even in the dim state: this namely, that they do attempt to make their Men of Letters their Governors! . . . Schools there are for every one: a foolish sort of training, yet still a sort. The youths who distinguish themselves in the lower school are promoted into favourable stations in

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 25, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Carlyle gives lectures in four different courses from 1837 to 1840 in London. The subject of his first course is "German Literature," which comprises six lectures; the second is entitled the "History of Literature," twelve lectures; the third is called "Revolutions of Modern Europe," six lectures; while the fourth is called "Heroes and Hero-worship," six lectures. For further details about these courses and lectures, see James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881*, vol. 1 (London, 1891) 104-05, 140-41, 145-53, 169-71, 192-97, 220; H. D. Traill, introduction, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, by Thomas Carlyle (London, 1898) vii-xi; Ian Campbell, *Thomas Carlyle* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974) 105-06; Fred Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 239-67.

the higher, that they may still more distinguish themselves,--forward and forward: it appears to be out of these that the Official Persons, and incipient Governors, are taken. These are they whom they *try* first, whether they can govern or not. And surely with the best hope: for they are the men that have already shown intellect. . . The man of intellect at the top of affairs: this is the aim of all constitutions and revolutions, if they have any aim. For the man of true intellect, as I assert and believe always, is the noblehearted man withal, the true, just, humane and valiant man. Get *him* for governor, all is got; fail to get him, though you had Constitutions plentiful as blackberries, and a Parliament in every village, there is nothing yet got!<sup>13</sup>

Carlyle was attracted to the Chinese civil examination system, viewing it as offering a fair and open chance to all promising talented intellectuals interested in finding themselves civil positions in local or central governments, and ensuring that people chosen to govern had real academic talents, rather than noble lineages. Carlyle believed men of true intellect tended to be men of noble hearts, genuineness, justness, humanity and valour as well, and the quality of governors certainly mattered more than the numbers of laws and regulations. He therefore proposed that the British government should adopt the Chinese civil examination system to recruit capable people to work for the government.

Though Carlyle had a high regard for Chinese civil examination, he did not embrace it wholeheartedly. Instead, he suggested that there might be something faulty in the academic courses for those governors-to-be, which he considered as “foolish.” He even proclaimed that not all governors selected by a civil examination are capable of fulfilling the responsibility they are trusted with. This skeptical perspective shows that Carlyle was not a blind admirer of Chinese culture. He simply used an idealized Chinese civil examination system as a contrast to attack

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841, London: Chapman, 1907) 168-69.

the corruption and inequality of the British civil service and to propagate his own idea of administration by scholars. His panegyric on the nature of the Chinese civil examination system, to some extent, reminded his fellow countrymen that though Britain was currently at war with China, some recommendable elements of her culture should not be overlooked or even degraded by the British intellectuals.

Further considering the historical context of his suggestion we can see that there is an irony embedded in his suggestion. If the Chinese civil examination system was truly as effective as Carlyle proclaimed it to be and the Chinese government was really governed by men of genuine intellect, why did this empire look so fragile in the face of the British force, which was dispatched from thousands of miles away. The irony therefore lies in the fact that the Chinese civil examination system did not necessarily ensure the country will be run by the right hands.

#### **D. China as a model for Britain in *Past and Present***

Carlyle's next few references to China appear in a book entitled *Past and Present* (1843), a collection of forty six short essays. In this book Carlyle fiercely attacks many unfavourable laws and regulations against the working public, such as the Corn-Laws, the Protecting-Duties and the Sliding-Scales. He suggests that in the face of these miseries Work seems to be the only "religion" available to cure the maladies of the British society. He proposes that Work is a way to find one's inner self and one's soul and therefore it is of a religious nature. He interprets this idea of considering Work as a religion as follows:

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will

follow it! . . . Labour is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness,--to all knowledge, 'self-knowledge' and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. . . . Work is of a religious nature: -- work is of a brave nature; which it is the aim of all religion to be.<sup>14</sup>

Proposing that Work is a means to know one's genuine self and also the ultimate aim of all religions in the world, Carlyle reminds his readers that all too often it is rather through various rituals of secular religions that people hope to find their own souls.<sup>15</sup> Possibly for the purpose of authenticating the universality of his argument, Carlyle used the Emperor of China as an example to illustrate his idea that "Work is Worship":

Or let us give a glance at China. Our new friend, the Emperor there,<sup>16</sup> is Pontiff of three hundred million men; who do all live and work, these many centuries now; authentically patronised by Heaven so far; and therefore must have some 'religion' of a kind. This Emperor-Pontiff has, in fact, a religious belief of certain Laws of Heaven; observes, with a religious rigour, his 'three thousand punctualities,' given out by men of insight, some sixty generations since, as a legible transcript of the same,-- the Heavens do seem to say, not totally an incorrect one. He has not much of a ritual, this Pontiff-Emperor; believes, it is likeliest, with the old Monks, that 'Labour is Worship.'<sup>17</sup>

Then he describes how the Chinese emperor, in order to publicize his belief in the importance of working, symbolically ploughs a red furrow in a public ceremony

<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ed. Richard D. Altick (New York: New York UP, 1965) 197-99.

<sup>15</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present* 225-26.

<sup>16</sup> It is Carlyle's personal wishful thinking to consider Emperor Daoguang (1821-1850, reigns from 1821-1850) a "new friend" of the British as his troops just lost the first Opium War (1839-42) to the British government. See Altick's note, *Past and Present* 232.

<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present* 232.

every early spring.<sup>18</sup> This image of a Chinese emperor ploughing in the field clearly forms a sharp contrast to the images of those “Idle” and “Unworking” aristocracies in Britain, whom Carlyle repudiates as unproductive consumers.<sup>19</sup> In addition to this symbolic act of worshiping work, Carlyle also mentions the Chinese people’s annual visits to the tombs of their parents and interprets it as “a kind of worship”.<sup>20</sup>

As far as Carlyle’s interpretation of the Chinese emperor’s symbolic ploughing is concerned, it reflects Carlyle’s wishful interpretation of Chinese culture. The imperial ceremony of ploughing was more like a symbolic activity of showing the importance the emperor sets on farming as well as an act of showing how eagerly he wished to encourage his people to devote themselves to farming, rather than a ritual of displaying how important work meant to one’s own life.<sup>21</sup> However, it is likely

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<sup>18</sup> See Carlyle, *Past and Present* 232. According to Wilson, Carlyle’s father James Carlyle (1757-1832) has read George Staunton’s *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* and often spoke about it to his eldest son Thomas when they were plowing turnips in the field. Part of Thomas Carlyle’s knowledge about China is therefore likely derived from Staunton’s account. See Wilson’s *Carlyle to “The French Revolution”* 92. Of this annual ceremony of ploughing conducted by the emperor of China, Staunton introduces “Within this compass has been raised the *Sien-nong-tan*, or *eminence of venerable agriculturists*. Thither the Emperor repairs every spring, and in compliance with ancient usages, goes through a small field, by way of doing honour to the profession of the husbandman. After his Majesty has directed that instrument for about an hour, a group of peasants chanting, at the same time, round him hymns in praise of husbandry, the princes of his court and great officers of state, following his example, and taking the plough by turns, make several furrows in his presence. They are all, as well as the Emperor himself, clothed in the garb befitting their new occupation. . . . The celebration of this exemplary festival, as it justly may be termed, is made known in the remotest village of the empire. It is meant to gratify even to the humblest cottager, and to be some consolation to him, in the disappointments which the vicissitudes of the season frequently occasion, when he recollects that his calling has been dignified in being adopted by his sovereign; who is thus incorporated in the most numerous and useful class among his subjects, and seems to acquire a common interest with them.” See Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from The King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, vol. 2, 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> For more Carlyle’s criticism on the unworking aristocracy of Britain, see his *Past and Present* 176-83.

<sup>20</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present* 233.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion on the symbolic meaning of this annual ceremony, see E. A. Kracke, Jr., “The Chinese and the Art of Government,” *The Legacy of China*, ed. Raymond Dawson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964) 335-36; Francesca Bray, *Agriculture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 1; Huang Lin, “Liji yueling zhong de gudai lisu tan” [On Ancient Etiquette and Custom: “Yueling” of *The Book of Rites*] 1 May 2006 <<http://www.yjsy.ecnu.edu.cn/daxue/ten/10-a-8.htm>>; Bao Weimin, “Xingshi de beihou: liang song quan nong zhidu de Lishi fanxi” [Behind Mode: A Historical Analysis of Agricultural Encouragement of the Northern Song and the Southern Song Dynasties] 1 May 2006 <<http://economy.guoxue.com/article.php/3131>>.

that Carlyle's wishful interpretation of the Chinese emperor's annual ceremony of ploughing was borrowed by G. Lowes Dickinson more than half a century later.<sup>22</sup>

Other allusions to the Chinese include the Chinese emperor's open-mindedness to different sects of Buddhism and his determination to look for talented people to assist him to govern the country. Carlyle notes that

Our friend the Pontiff-Emperor permits cheerfully, though with contempt, all manner of Buddhists, Bonzes, Talapains and such like, to build brick Temples, on the voluntary principle; to worship with what of chantings, paper-lanterns and tumultuous brayings, pleases them; and make night hideous, since they find some comfort in so doing. Cheerfully, though with contempt. He is a wiser Pontiff than many persons think! He is as yet the one Chief Potentate or Priest in this Earth who has made a distinct systematic attempt at what we call the ultimate result of all religion, '*Practical Hero-worship*:' he does incessantly, with true anxiety, in such way as he can, search and sift (it would appear) his whole enormous population for the Wisest born among them; by which Wisest, as by born Kings. These three hundred million men are governed. The Heavens, to a certain extent, do appear to countenance him.<sup>23</sup>

Here the positive image of the Chinese emperor as a liberal-minded monarch to the Buddhists' way of paying tributes to their idols deserves closer examination. On the one hand, Carlyle suggests that the Chinese emperor is a wiser monarch than

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<sup>22</sup> In his *Letters from John Chinaman* (1901), Dickinson expands Carlyle's idea and suggests that Confucianism is keen to encourage people to work. He said: "Confucianism is the exponent of the ideal of work. Your eighteenth-century observers, who laid so much stress on the ritual of the Emperor's yearly ploughing, were nearer to the heart of our civilisation than many later and less sympathetic inquirers. The duty of man to labour, and primarily to labour on the soil, is a fundamental postulate of our religion. Hence the worship of Mother Earth, the source of all increase; hence the worship of Heaven, the giver of light and rain; and hence also that social system whose aim is to secure a general access to the soil. The willing dedication of all, in brotherhood and peace, to labour blessed by the powers of heaven and earth, such is the simple, intelligible ideal we have set before our people, such is the conception we have embodied in our institutions." See G. Lowes Dickinson, *Letters from John Chinaman and Other Essays*, ed. E. M. Forster (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1946) 33-34.

<sup>23</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present* 233.



most European monarchs because he is more broad-minded on religious issues; on the other hand, Carlyle suggests that the Chinese emperor is unlikely to be a Buddhist himself because his attitude to the worshiping rituals and practices of the Buddhists is described as contemptuous. The later observation therefore reflects Carlyle's wishful thinking that a wise monarch like the Chinese emperor is unlikely to be a Buddhist or someone who indulges himself in any secular religion. He asserts that the Chinese emperor's only religion is Work and it is embedded in all religions in the world.

At the end of his positive description of the Chinese Pontiff-Emperor, Carlyle adds that

These three hundred millions actually make porcelain, souchong tea, with innumerable other things; and fight, under Heaven's flag, against Necessity;--and have fewer Seven-Years Wars, Thirty-Years Wars, French Revolution Wars, and infernal fightings with each other, than certain millions elsewhere have!<sup>24</sup>

This passage implies that, unlike the Europeans who often go to wars for political, religious and territorial disputes, the Chinese only fight for their daily needs. The temperament Carlyle attributes to the Chinese in this short passage therefore suggests that the Chinese seem to be more contented and peaceful than most Europeans. Again, this high esteem for the Chinese, to a certain extent, reflects Carlyle's strategy of using the Chinese as an idealized "Other" to criticize the injustice and maladministration present in the writer's own society.

#### **E. A reminiscence of China's civil examination scheme in *Latter-Day Pamphlets***

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<sup>24</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present* 233.

Nearly a decade after he published his *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History* Carlyle mentions the Chinese civil examination again in an essay entitled “Downing Street,” collected in his *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850).

In the article Carlyle calls for an immediate reform of the “administrative establishment in Downing Street,”<sup>25</sup> the supreme executive body of the British government, and recommends the British government to adopt a civil examination scheme:

The Proposal is, That Secretaries under and upper, that all manner of changeable or permanent servants in the Government Offices shall be selected *without* reference to their power of getting into Parliament;--that, in short, the Queen shall have power of nominating the half-dozen or half-score Officers of the Administration, to official seats there, without reference to any constituency but their own only, which of course will mean her Prime Minister's.<sup>26</sup>

This proposal reminds us that, ten years after he praised the Chinese civil examination scheme for the first time, Carlyle still considers the Chinese way of appointing civil officers is worthy for the British to copy. He thinks that citizens of all classes deserve a chance to compete for available positions in the government, rather than bestowing the positions on those people with better family backgrounds.<sup>27</sup> This idea of appointing competent people to be civil servants regardless of their family backgrounds or social connections shows a clear ideological continuity of what Carlyle had already suggested before in “The Hero as Man of Letters: Johnson, Rousseau, Burns.”

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<sup>25</sup> Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850, London: Chapman & Hall, 1898) 92.

<sup>26</sup> Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* 114.

<sup>27</sup> See Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* 118.

## F. From idealization to disillusion: Carlyle's criticism of the Chinese emperor

Of all Carlyle's early references to China, except for the Great Wall which the protagonist considered a construction of secondary quality in *Sartor Resartus*, his remarks about the Chinese and their emperor are mostly positive. In Carlyle's sketch of China, the empire is governed by a virtuous and wise emperor, assisted by a body of talented civil officials, while the Chinese are hardworking and peaceful. However, in one hurried note to Thomas Woolner (1825-1892), dated November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Carlyle, possibly for the first time, shatters the favourable image of the Chinese emperor that he held for decades. This unusual criticism of the Chinese emperor, Carlyle comments that:

‘Pirates are fair game on all waters, on the part of all men. But does Capt. Osborn know for certain that the Taipings require to be shot? One Mr. Meadows, a very ingenious man, who had been twelve years in China, and is gone back, had, when I saw him, the idea that the Taipings were intrinsically in the *right*; and that it was the unworthy Phantasm of an “Emperor” and his yellow Cousins who got hopelessly out of square!’<sup>28</sup>

Denouncing the Chinese emperor and his Manchurian officials as “hopelessly out of square,” it seems reasonable to presume that Carlyle has changed his image of the Chinese emperor and officials from positive to negative. One of the reasons for this is probably, as Mei Guangdi suggested, his reading of Thomas Taylor Meadows’ *The Chinese and Their Rebellions: Viewed in Connection with Their National Philosophy, Ethics, Legislation, and Administration* (1856), in which a sympathetic light was cast on the quelled Taipings (1850-1864).<sup>29</sup> Hence, the Chinese emperor is no longer a

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<sup>28</sup> Wilson, *Carlyle to Threescore-and-Ten* 485.

<sup>29</sup> Another person who might have provided Carlyle first-hand materials about the Taipings is Algernon Bertram Freeman Mitford (1837-1916), see Mei Guangdi, “Kalaier yu zhongguo” [Carlyle

wise monarch in the eyes of Carlyle, but a slaughterer who hires foreign mercenaries to kill off the Taipings. In fact, Carlyle not only reprehends the Chinese emperor and his Manchurian officials for slaying the rebels, but also rebukes the British mercenaries, such as Charles George Gordon [also known as Chinese Gordon, Gordon Pasha or Gordon of Khartoum] (1833-1885) and Sherard Osborn (1822-1875), for helping them.<sup>30</sup> If we consider his works published after reading about the Taipings, it seems reasonable to say that the more Carlyle knew about the contemporary political turmoil in late Qing China, the less he was willing to uphold his former image of the Chinese emperor as an enlightened and wise monarch.

### G. Summary

On the whole, the images that Carlyle attributes to the Chinese in his works tend to be idealistic and positive. The Chinese emperor is an enlightened monarch who grants his people religious freedom and sets himself as an example of working to earn one's own bread, though in a symbolical way. Furthermore, he is also an attentive and responsible monarch as he enthusiastically, through civil examinations, searches for talented intellectuals to assist himself to govern his empire. China, under the administration of such a wise emperor and a body of gifted officials, seems to be an oriental utopia. Such a utopian picture of China, to an extent, reflects Carlyle's disappointment in contemporary British society, where government officials are appointed mainly because of the family backgrounds of those prospective candidates or through bribery, rather than by their knowledge and talents, and where the noble working class suffer.<sup>31</sup> In comparison with the Europeans, the

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and China], *Sixiang yu shidai yuekan* 46 (1947): 5; Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 287.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *Carlyle to Threescore-and-Ten* 485-86.

<sup>31</sup> In his *Past and Present*, the misconduct of the government that Carlyle regularly attacked included the Corn Laws, the Sliding-Scales, the Protecting-Duties and the Bribery-Elections. For more specific criticisms addressing these issues, see Altick, introduction, *Past and Present* v-xviii; Carlyle,

Chinese are seen as a diligent and peaceful people, who spend more time in the farmlands than on the battlefields.

### III. Images of China and the Chinese in Walter Savage Landor's "Imaginary Conversations between Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti"

#### A. Publication facts

From 1824 to 1829 Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) published two series of *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen*, in which eighty three conversations were included in five volumes.<sup>32</sup> Landor did not stop writing new conversations after the publication of these two series of conversations; instead, he kept inventing new dialogues between people of different nationalities and times for nearly forty years.<sup>33</sup> By the time *The Works of Walter Savage Landor* appeared in 1846, there were one hundred and twenty five dialogues in total and twenty one of them had never been published elsewhere before.<sup>34</sup>

Possibly misled by the title of Landor's first two series of imaginary conversations, those who have discussed "Imaginary Conversations between the Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti," such as Raymond Dawson and Ge Guilu, assume that the dialogue in question was collected in one of the five volumes.<sup>35</sup> But, if we

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*Past and Present* 172-88, 250-54.

<sup>32</sup> Landor's first series of *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen* appeared in 1824. It contained thirty-six conversations, which run to two volumes, fifty sheets octavo and nearly eight hundred pages. The second edition of this collection was published in 1826. The third volume of this work was available in May, 1828. The second series of *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen* was published in two volumes in 1829. See Robert Henry Super, *Walter Savage Landor: A Biography* (London: John Calder, 1957) 166, 200.

<sup>33</sup> Super 165.

<sup>34</sup> See Super 353.

<sup>35</sup> In his *The Chinese Chameleon*, Dawson offered a short introduction of his extracts of the imaginary conversation in question. He said: "Landor's principal prose work was his 'Imaginary Conversations', which were published between 1824 and 1829. They include a conversation between the Emperor of China and a certain Tsing-Ti, who was supposed to have been sent on a mission by him to Britain. Tsing-Ti recounts to his incredulous master the strange customs of the people he has just visited, and the result is a delightful satire on British manners spiced with facetious allusions to the curious customs of the Chinese, the general effect being reminiscent of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*." Dawson's assumption was adopted by Ge Guilu, in whose *Wu wai de yuan yin* and its bibliographical companion *Zhong ying wenxue guanxi biannianshi* we found his

check the titles of the conversations collected in these five volumes, no trace of the Chinese Emperor or Tsing-Ti can be found anywhere. According to Robert Henry Super, the draft of the dialogue in question was first composed in 1835, when Landor made a short visit to Germany for three months, and its original title was “The Nineteen Audiences Granted by the Emperor of China to Tsing-ti.”<sup>36</sup> In December of 1837 and January of 1838, a number of extracts of these audiences were published in the columns of *The Examiner*, which was edited by Landor’s friend John Forster.<sup>37</sup> The complete audiences were not printed until 1846 and the title of the work was changed into “Imaginary Conversations: Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti,” which comprised a short introduction and eight audiences.<sup>38</sup>

There is an interesting episode worth noting regarding the deferred publication of “Imaginary Conversations between Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti.” In fact, when Landor sent the manuscript of the “Nineteen Audiences” to Saunders and Otley for publication in October of 1836, the publishers turned down his request because they had just lost one hundred and fifty pounds with the writer’s earlier book of similar nature *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), in which imaginary letters were exchanged mainly between Aspasia and Cleone, hailed as Landor’s finest writing by the reviewer in *The Examiner* in March.<sup>39</sup> Being disappointed at the low interest of publishers in his “Nineteen Audiences,” Landor left the manuscript and several other writings at his secretary Lady Blessington’s disposal and told her “[i]f there is anything passable in either, do what you please with it, and burn the rest.”<sup>40</sup>

Fortunately, Blessington did not burn the manuscript or we would have no chance to

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reference to Dawson. Likewise, Ge also suggested the dialogue was first published in 1824. See Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon* 206; Ge, *Wu wai de yuan yin* 261-63 and *Zhongying wenxue guanxi biannianshi* 80.

<sup>36</sup> See Super 271-73; Malcolm Elwin, *Landor: A Replevin* (London: Macdonald, 1958) 196-97.

<sup>37</sup> Elwin 311.

<sup>38</sup> Elwin 296-97, 311; Super 273, 353.

<sup>39</sup> Super 263, 273-74.

<sup>40</sup> Super 274.

study the work today and discuss how much he might have known about Chinese customs and manners.

## B. Historical background of the work

As clarified above, the work was accomplished during Landor's short visit to Germany in 1835. However, the British monarch that Landor wished to ridicule in this work was George IV, who became Prince Regent in 1811 and then reigned from 1820 to 1830, rather than William IV, who claimed the throne in 1830 and died in 1837. This can be confirmed by Landor's own note of a portrait, in which the reigning King of Britain was depicted, as seen by Tsing-Ti in person.<sup>41</sup>

Generally speaking, the reputation of George IV as a king was not favourable. His exorbitant lifestyle degraded his public image as king. Furthermore, during his regency and reign a number of political and religious turmoils took place, including the defeated Bill of Pains and Penalties of 1820, which the Prince Regent sent to Parliament in order to divorce his wife Queen Caroline and deprive her her rights and title as the Queen,<sup>42</sup> and Catholic Emancipation, which he formerly supported with the Whigs before he took the throne, but turned to oppose it after he was crowned.<sup>43</sup> In addition, his huge debts<sup>44</sup> and addiction to alcohol<sup>45</sup> also damaged

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<sup>41</sup> Of this portrait, Tsing-Ti told the Emperor that "I have seen a portrait of the reigning King of England, in which he appears so pious and devout, so resolved to please God at any price, that he is represented with his legs confined in narrow japanned cabinets, which the English, when applied to these purposes, called boots. They are stiff and black, without gold or other ornament, or even an inscription to inform us on what occasions he made the vows of endurance." Landor added a note to explain this King of Britain was "George the Fourth." See Walter Savage Landor, *The Complete Works of Walter Savage Landor*, ed. T. Earle Welby, vol. 9 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969) 8.

<sup>42</sup> For more information about George IV's proposal of the bill and the trial of Queen Caroline in the House of Lords, see Roger Fulford, *George the Fourth* (1935; London: Gerald Duckworth, 1949) 162-66; Christopher Hibbert, *George IV: Regent and King, 1811-1830* (London: Allen lane, 1973) 154-66; Ernest Anthony Smith, *George IV* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 181-83.

<sup>43</sup> For more details about George IV's changes of attitude to Catholic Emancipation, see George Ian Thom Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics, 1820-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 58-61, 169-75; Hibbert 289-91.

<sup>44</sup> Hibbert 21-22, 81.

<sup>45</sup> Hibbert 7-8.

his image. Upon his death in 1830, many newspapers published articles against him openly. For instance, Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville (1794-1865), a political and social diarist, wrote "Nobody thinks any more of the late King than if he had been dead fifty years, unless it be to abuse him and to rake up all his vices and misdeeds."<sup>46</sup> *The Times* published a harsh verdict against him, in which we read

There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased king. What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one throb of unmercenary sorrow? [...] If he ever had a friend – a devoted friend in any rank of life – we protest that the name of him or her never reached us. An inveterate voluptuary, especially if he be an artificial person, is of all known beings the most selfish. Selfishness is the true repellant of human sympathy. Selfishness feels no attachment, and invites none; it is the charnel house of the affections. Nothing more remains to be said about George IV but to pay—as pay we must—for his profusion; and to turn his bad conduct to some account by tying up the hands of those who come after him in what concerns the public money."<sup>47</sup>

In addition, George IV was also a popular figure of mockery in contemporary caricatures.<sup>48</sup> For instance, in one caricature entitled "Moment of Pain," pictured by Theodore Lane in 1820, George IV, dressed as a Chinese mandarin, is depicted with a dejected face when he knows the proceedings against his wife, Queen Caroline, are abandoned.<sup>49</sup> In another caricature entitled "The Great Joss and His

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<sup>46</sup> Smith 273. Regarding the diverse comments on his contribution to Britain, Hibbert mentioned that a small number of positive comments glorifying his achievements can also be found upon George IV's death, but they are considered "wholly out of tune with the general mood of the country." For passages of these positive comments, see Hibbert 341.

<sup>47</sup> See *Times*, 15 July 1830. For more critical comments on George IV's duty of being a king, see also Smith 273-74; Hibbert 341-42.

<sup>48</sup> A rich collection of these caricatures can be found in Kenneth Baker's *George IV: A Life in Caricatures* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005)

<sup>49</sup> Theodore Lane, "Moment of Pain, George IV," *George IV: Regent and King, 1811-1830*, by Christopher Hibbert, illustration 21, N. pag. In this painting, Sir Benjamin Bloomfield is depicted as



Playthings,” finished by Robert Seymour in 1829, George IV is once again depicted as a Chinese mandarin with a pigtail and long nails. Four architects working on George IV’s architectural projects, such as the Brighton Pavilion and the remodelled Buckingham Palace, are also dressed in Chinese fashion and wear pigtails.<sup>50</sup>

However, when we come to examine his taste in architecture and the decorative arts, it should not be forgotten that George IV was definitely one of the most important patrons of chinoiserie in Britain in the early nineteenth century. He commissioned John Nash (1752-1835) to work on a number of architectural projects, which were all finished with rich taste in chinoiserie. For instance, based upon Nash’s designs, a Chinese pagoda and bridge were erected in St James’s park in 1814,<sup>51</sup> Chinese pagodas and reliefs of Chinese dragons were also extensively used to decorate the Music Room in The Royal Pavilion in Brighton,<sup>52</sup> while many Chinese figures were painted on the walls of the Banqueting Room of the same pavilion.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, being an ardent patron of Chinoiserie, no wonder George IV was often caricatured wearing mandarin clothes.

It is possible that Landor might have similar images in mind for creating his Chinese characters, since their physical characteristics are mostly in accordance with those depicted in contemporary paintings or caricatures.

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a Chinese military officer wearing a pigtail and carrying a Chinese-style broadsword. For more ridiculed images of George IV in caricatures, see also William Heath’s *Brobdignag Cottage. Rusticating* (1824) and *A Fishing Party, What great Enjoyments Rise from Trivial Things . . .* (1827) in Hibbert, illustration 33 and 34, *Which is the Dirtiest?* (1820) in Smith, illustration 21b.

<sup>50</sup> This caricature is in Baker’s *George IV: A Life in Caricature* 131.

<sup>51</sup> An engraving of the pagoda and the bridge was made by J. Gleadah after T. W. Edy in 1814. See illustration 10 in Hibbert’s *George IV*. Of the short life of this fret bridge Hugh Honour said “Unfortunately, it made its début as the centre-piece in a firework display when rockets were let off with such gay abandon that the upper storeys caught fire, burst into flames and fell, popping and sizzling, into the water.” See Oliver Impey’s *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1977) 152, 154.

<sup>52</sup> For a picture of the Pavilion Music Room, see Smith’s *George IV*, illustration 19. This music room was finished in 1822, but damaged by fire in 1975. For more detailed description about this room, see Impey 173.

<sup>53</sup> For a picture of The Banqueting Room of the Brighton Pavilion, see Hibbert, illustration 1. A general description about the Chinoiserie decoration of The Banqueting Room and the Music Room, see Impey 173.

### C. Images of the ethnical characteristics of the Chinese

Landor gives a rather stereotypical, yet vivid, picture of Tsing-Ti. When he is summoned to meet the emperor in a chamber adorned with an azure dragon and two leopards at the entrance, he performs several prostrations as soon as he enters the room.<sup>54</sup> When the emperor comes to greet him, he says "Tsing-Ti! Tsing-Ti! Health, prosperity, long life and long nails to thee! and a tail at thy girdle which might lay siege to the *great wall*."<sup>55</sup> In this short greeting two ethnical features are attributed to Tsing-Ti: long nails and a pigtail. The pigtail was a distinctive ethnic emblem attributed to Chinese males since the mid-seventeenth century, after a Manchu prince regent called Dorgon (1612-1650) issued an order in 1644 to require all adult Han Chinese males to shave their heads except for a patch at the back of the skull where the hair was left to be braided into a queue.<sup>56</sup> This image of Chinese males wearing pigtails thereafter was extensively represented in works of European artists to add local colour to their works.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, as Landor attributed a pigtail to Tsing-Ti, he might have copied this distinctive ethnical image of contemporary Chinese males

<sup>54</sup> The formal manner of presenting oneself to the Emperor of China was to perform a rite called *sangui jiukou*, which means three kneelings and nine bows. For more details about how it was performed and what it meant to the Chinese, see Nigel Cameron's *Barbarians and Mandarins* (1970, Hong Kong: Oxford UP, 1997) 140-41.

<sup>55</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 3.

<sup>56</sup> This practice of forcing Han Chinese to wear pigtails was considered by the Manchu rulers a symbol of submission to the conquerors. However, tens of thousands of people in south China lost their lives for not complying with this policy in early Qing Dynasty. In his *Bellum Tartaricum* [also known as *The conquest of the Great and Most Renowned Empire of China, by the Invasion of the Tartars, Who in These Last Seven Years, Have Wholly Subdued that Vast Empire: together with a Map of the Provinces, and Chief Cities of the Countries, for the Better Understanding of the Story*, translated into English by an anonymous translator and published in 1654] Martin Martini described in details how this practice was enforced throughout the empire and how many people had been killed for refusing to comply with the policy. For detailed information about this hair regulation, see Frederick Wade Mote's *Imperial China, 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999) 828-29, 832-33.

<sup>57</sup> For pictures of Chinese men wearing pigtails see illustrations in Honour's *Chinoiserie*, no. 37, *Singerie* (1735), by Christopher Huet; no. 79 a and b (1757), two fresco paintings by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo; no. 80 a (1761-5), a porcelain relief by Giuseppe Gricci; William Alexander, *The Costume of China: Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1814; Singapore: Graham Brash, 1990), plate no. 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47, 48; Impey, plate no. 76, *The Court at Brighton a la Chinoise* (1816), a caricature satirizing Prince Regent's passion for chinoiserie by George Cruikshank.

from one of the caricatures.

Landor also assumed that wearing long nails is one of the distinctive ethnical emblems of the Chinese gentry. In a chapter entitled “Huangdi yu qingdi de duihua—lantuo xinmu zhong de zhongguo wenmin zhi bang” [China as a Civilized Country in the Eye of W. S. Landor] Ge argued that the images of rich Chinese men growing their nails long and ladies of the gentry class having little feet were two inveterate images in the minds of Westerners for a long time. He traces the earliest Western record of the fashion of rich Chinese men with long nails back to *The Travels of Friar Odoric*, where we read

Moreover 'tis the mark of gentility in that country to have the nails long; and some let their thumb-nails grow to such an extent that they grow right round the hand. And with the women the great beauty is to have little feet; and for this reason mothers are accustomed, as soon as girls are born to them, to swathe their feet tightly so that they can never grow in the least.<sup>58</sup>

In his note to this passage, Henry Yule verifies “That of the men letting their nails grow long appears to have been becoming obsolete in Du Halde’s time; and I am not aware of any recent notice of it.” Since this fashion was no longer practiced by the Chinese gentry since Du Halde’s time (1674-1743) and it is suggested by Qian that Landor’s imaginary conversations show no evidence that he had consulted any work about China which could have been available to him, it seems sensible to assume that Landor either had read some older texts like *The Travels of Odoric* or had consulted other resources other than printed texts to obtain the impression that wearing long nails was still a fashion among the Chinese gentry in the early nineteenth century. With regard to the second possibility, it is interesting to note

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<sup>58</sup> Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 2, 256.

that during Landor's lifetime the British government had dispatched two embassies to China, one from 1792 to 1794 and another from 1816 to 1817, and some paintings were produced to depict the people they were going to visit. Probably the most well-known ones are those two caricatures painted by the British caricaturists James Gillray (1756-1815) and George Cruikshank (1792-1878). In these two caricatures not only the Chinese emperor and his courtiers are wearing long nails, but also George IV. This shows that both British artists still regarded long nails as a distinctive and stereotypical ethnic feature of the Chinese gentry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Landor might have seen one of these famous caricatures or other works of similar characteristics. Elsewhere Landor also attributed the practice of binding feet<sup>60</sup> to add more local color to his Chinese characters.

Landor also gives four notes in his "Imaginary Conversation" to explain the terms he uses and the customs he mentions.<sup>61</sup> For instance, in the first audience he uses a term "Chang-ting" as an appellation for the Chinese emperor and notes this as follows: "Chan-ting, *Supreme Court*: the Emperor is often so called." Elsewhere he notes yellow to be "the colour of the highest distinction in China" and the English name "Bacon" to be pronounced as "Pa-Kong" in Mandarin as "the Chinese have no B." Hence, Qian's comment that Landor did not bother to consult any works to add any authentic local colour to his Chinese characters seems to be a hasty conclusion.

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<sup>59</sup> In Gillray's caricature *The Reception of the Diplomatie and his Suite, at the Court of Pekin* (14 September, 1792, fig. 1), published one week before Lord Macartney embarked for China, we see Emperor Qianlong and one of his courtiers portrayed with long nails. In Cruikshank's *The Court at Brighton a la Chinese* (1816, fig. 2), we found George III and one of his courtiers portrayed with long nails as well. Thirteen years later long nails can still be seen in Robert Seymour's *The Great Joss and His Playthings* (February 1829), in which George IV was pictured as a Chinese mandarin with long nails. These three caricatures can be found in Draper Hill, *Mr. Gillray: The Caricaturist* (London: Phaidon, 1965) plate 41; Impey, plate 76; Baker 131.

<sup>60</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 28.

<sup>61</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 3, 15, 34.



41. *The Reception of the Diplomatique & his Suite, at the Court of Peking. 14 September 1792.* (p. 40)

Fig. 1. *The Reception of the Diplomatique and his Suite at the Court of Peking* (1792), James Gillray



Fig.2. *The Court at Brighton a la Chinese* (1816), George Cruikshank

#### D. Images of the Chinese and the British in “Imaginary Conversations between Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti”

Unlike other British writers who may have consulted Jesuits’ works about China in order to get some genuine local color for their Chinese personages, as we have seen in the cases of Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Carlyle,<sup>62</sup> Landor seemed to show little interest to consult any book to obtain authentic knowledge about the Chinese. Except for the Chinese names of the personages, a reference to *Kong-Fu-Tsi* [Confucius] and something about the distinctive ethnical features of the Chinese, Landor’s Chinese characters reflect less local colour than Goldsmith’s *Lien Chi Altangi*, the protagonist of *The Citizen of the World*.<sup>63</sup> Indicating Landor’s lack of vigour in characterizing his Chinese personages with more genuine local colour, Qian Zhongshu further suggests that:

To be sure, English men of letters continued to produced exquisite pieces of imaginative literature on Chinese subjects throughout the nineteenth century, but from Landor’s *Imaginary Conversation between Emperor of China and Tsing Ti* and Lamb’s *Dissertation upon Roast Pig* to Richard Garnett’s delightful Chinese tales in *The Twilight of Gods* and Mrs. Augusta Webster’s charming fantasy *Yu Pe-ya’s Lute*, we find nowhere the seventeenth- and eighteen-century spirit of supplying information about China *besides* indulging in the free play of imagination. Defoe, for instance, had consulted Le Comte when writing those Chinese scenes in his *Robinson Crusoe*, but what did Lamb or Landor consult in order to get the right local colour? They simply did not care. Ever since Lord Macartney’s embassy, sinology has become established in England as a special branch of knowledge, and the penalty of specialization is that while professional students know more and more about their subject, the general public cares for it

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<sup>62</sup> For discussions about these writers’ references to works of Jesuits and other authentic resources, see Qian Zhongshu, “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century,” 119-21, 123-24, 134-35, 137, 139, 199; Ge Guilu, *Wu wai de yuan yin*, 110-11, 154-61, 216, 272, Rosalind Vallance, introduction, *The Citizen of the World*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Qian, “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century” 199.

less and less. The subject ceases to be a part of humane cultural interest.<sup>64</sup>

This lengthy account, on one hand, explains why it seems that Landor did not care to consult any book to add more authentic local color to characterize his Chinese characters; on the other hand, it also leads one to ponder the possibility whether Landor had consulted alternative sources other than the works of the Jesuits or the British visitors to China. This possibility has not been systematically examined.

If we examine all the features that Landor attributes to his Chinese characters, Qian's assumption needs to be questioned. For instance, Landor's references to the Chinese fashions and practices, such as having long nails, wearing pigtails, binding feet,<sup>65</sup> regarding yellow as the highest distinction of empire,<sup>66</sup> holding civil

<sup>64</sup> Qian, "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century" 199.

<sup>65</sup> Foot-binding became a fashion in China since the ninth or tenth century and it continued to be practiced till the early twentieth century. According to Yule and Cameron, Friar Odoric was the first European traveler who ever mentioned this practice in Europe. See Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 2, 256; Cameron 115. In Matteo Ricci's manuscript, later expanded and translated into Latin by Nichlos Trigault and entitled *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu: Ex P. Matthaei Ricij eiusdem Societatis co[m]mentarijs, libri V. ad S.D.N. Paulum. V. In quibus Sinensis regni mores, leges atq[ue] instituta & nouae illius ecclesiae difficilissima primordia accurate & summa fide describuntur* (1615, which was translated into English by Louis Joseph Gallagher in 1953 and entitled *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610*), Ricci also mentioned that small feet were regarded as a symbol of beauty in China. Ladies usually shaped their feet by binding them with long strips of cloth at very early ages. See Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Louis Joseph Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953) 77. This unusual practice of Chinese women also attracted the attention of several members of the Macartney embassy. For instance, in George Staunton and John Barrow's books, both British visitors offered detailed descriptions about this "unnatural" practice and then severely criticized the Chinese for keeping this fashion. See Staunton, *An Authentic Account*, vol. 1, 208-09; Barrow 75-77. In addition to the writers mentioned, in his *Storia della Fondazione della Congregazione e del Collegio de' Cinesi* (3 vols, 1832) Matteo Ripa (1682-1746), a court painter of Kanghsi and the founder of Chinese College of Naples, established in 1732 and closed in 1888, also gave a detailed picture of how foot-binding was practiced and his personal judgment of it. He said "I was informed by Chinese that the first who discovered this stratagem was one of their ancient emperors, who purposely hinted that nothing was more beautiful in a woman than to have the smallest feet possible. This imperial opinion being made public throughout China, every husband desired that his wife should be in the fashion, and mothers sought to secure to their daughters an imaginary beauty which it was found could be procured by art. Accordingly, at the tender age of three months female infants have their feet bound so tightly that the growth of this part of body is entirely stopped, and they cannot walk without hobbling or limping; and if upon any occasion they endeavor to quicken their pace, they are in danger of falling at every step. Even when walking at a slow pace, they find it impossible to balance their bodies upon a support so small and disproportionate, and are consequently obliged to walk like ducks, wadding about from left to right. In the case of marriage, the parties not being able to see each other, it is customary to send the exact dimensions of the lady's foot to her intended, instead of sending her portrait as we do in Europe." This English translation is from Fortunate



examinations for choosing appropriate civil officers and allowing citizens to choose their own religious beliefs, tend to suggest that Landor should have certain basic knowledge about the Chinese culture.

Tsing-Ti considers his fellow countrymen “civilized and courteous.”<sup>67</sup> In terms of the religious life of the Chinese, the Chinese emperor suggests that his people are, in comparison to the British, “less ferocious and less childish.” In addition, the Chinese government holds a more liberal attitude to people’s religious beliefs because citizens of China are granted freedom to choose their own favorite religions. This freedom is testified in the emperor’s statement that “[l]et every man choose his idol as freely as he chooses his wife; let him be constant if he can; if he can not, let him at least be civil.”<sup>68</sup> As for the temperaments of the Chinese religionary workers, Tsing-Ti and the emperor suggest:

Emperor: How then could the religion pass away so soon?

Tsing-Ti: For those very reasons. Religions may differ, but priests are similar in all countries. They will have blood, they will have mysteries, they will have money; they will threaten, they will persecute, they will command.

Emperor: Not here.

Tsing-Ti: For which reason the empire has lasted long; fathers, and princes who resemble them, are respected; and the nation, though surrounded by barbarians, by predatory and warlike tribes, has enjoyed more peace and prosperity than any other. Industry and quiet, charity and hospitality, cleanly and frugal habits, are always in exact proportion to the poverty and paucity of the priesthood. This is the only important

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Prandi, *Memoirs of Father Ripa during Thirteen Year’s Residence at the Court of Peking in the Service of the Emperor of China: With an Account of the Foundation of the College for the Education of Young Chinese at Naples* (London: Murray, 1844) 58, *The Making of the Modern World*, 10 Oct. 2005 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/>>. For additional information about its social implication in the eyes of the Chinese and the westerners, see also Mote 78, 967-68.

<sup>66</sup> Ricci mentions that yellow colour is exclusively for the Chinese Emperor and his consanguinity. Anyone who applies this colour to his or her clothes and houses will be considered as a rebel. See Ricci 69.

<sup>67</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 17.

<sup>68</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 14.



truth I have learned with certainty in my travels.<sup>69</sup>

Reprehending British priests for their avariciousness and inappropriate preaching on the one hand, and then praising the Chinese priests for their calmness, charity, cleanness, frugality, hospitality and industriousness on the other hand, Landor shows his disappointment in the clergy of his own country and posits Chinese priests as ideal models.

With regard to the general humanity of the Chinese and the British as well as the temperaments of the courtiers of both countries, the Chinese emperor and Tsing-Ti have the following comment.

Emperor: Dost thou verily think, Tsing-Ti, that these [English] chancellors and bishops are in earnest?

Tsing-Ti: They appear so. I never heard of anyone among them caught stealing on the river, or riding off with another's horse or ass, or setting fire to houses for plunder, or infesting the high-road.

Emperor: Calm and moral as they are, I perceive that much more lying and shuffling is required and practiced in their government than in mine. England is all mercantile, from the pinnacle of the Temple to the sewer of the Exchange. Our dealers may be as thievish as theirs: our mandarins, praised be God, are better. Although they feel at seasons a superficial itch for lucre, they are not blotched and buboed with its pestilence: they do not lead their children to be fed out of the platters of the poor, nor make the citizens, who have idols of their own, worship theirs, and pay for it.<sup>70</sup>

Though praising the British chancellors and bishops as “calm” and “moral” in the very beginning, the Chinese emperor still believes that fewer “lying and shuffling” deeds are performed in his own court. In addition, unlike the British who seemed to turn everything into a commercial product, which somehow reflects the

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<sup>69</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 35.

<sup>70</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 24.

commercialism of contemporary British society, the Chinese, by contrast, show no interest in making money out of their religions. This ironical passage therefore suggests that the Chinese are better than the British in terms of their humanity, morality and religious practice.

As for the images of the Chinese emperor and the British king, Landor has a high regard for the former and sneers at the latter for lacking interest in poetry.<sup>71</sup> In the fourth audience, the Chinese emperor recites a lengthy account from Confucius [Kong-Fu-Tsi] to show how he and his children respected and practiced the doctrines of this Chinese philosopher;<sup>72</sup> while in the fifth audience he asks Tsing-Ti what the British king normally reads to enrich his mind, the emperor cannot believe that the British king has never asked anyone to read verse at his bedside or table.<sup>73</sup> Blaming the British king for showing no interest in literature and indulging himself in a luxurious life and associating with people of debatable characteristics, Landor has presented a very negative picture of George IV. To a certain degree, the story recaptures Voltaire's eulogy of China, a land governed by a philosophical sovereign who is never tired of learning.

Nevertheless, even though most characteristics of the Chinese are depicted as positive, Landor does mention one less agreeable fashion practiced by the Chinese—consuming opium. For instance, in the sixth audience, the emperor asks Tsing-Ti whether he has taken opium because he sounds irrational.<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere in the eighth audience a French poet refers to Tsing-Ti as an opium-eater and rebukes

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<sup>71</sup> Similar idea was proposed by John Wolcot [*pseud.* Peter Pindar] before, in whose "Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China (1792)" the emperor of China, Kien Long, was praised for his poetic gift, while the European monarchs were poignantly ridiculed for lacking of poetic interest. See Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China* 6.

<sup>72</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 25.

<sup>73</sup> See Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 28.

<sup>74</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 25.

him for his “eastern dream.”<sup>75</sup>

### E. Images of the British

As stated earlier the overall tone of the work is sarcastic and the fellow countrymen of Landor are meant to be ridiculed and criticized, hence the general images attributed to the British people are mostly negative. Nevertheless, Landor still attributes several positive characteristics to the British, though mostly in a humorous way. For example, the Chinese emperor says “Little as the progress is which the Europeans seem to have made in the path of humanity, yet the British, we know, are less cruel than their neighbours, and more given to reflection and meditation.”<sup>76</sup> Elsewhere Tsing-Ti also comments on the agreeable elements in the morality of the British public as follows: “The English, although they have lost their religion, are still in many of their dealings the most honest and abstinent people in the world.”

Regarding the political and religious conditions of Britain, Landor also uses China as an idealized land to satirize the chaos and irrationality of his own country. In terms of the religious conflicts between different sects of Christianity, Tsing-Ti considers the European nations to be more barbarous than China: “The nations of Europe are so infinitely more barbarous than anything we in China can conceive, that, however incredible it may appear, the story is not unfounded.”<sup>77</sup> In one of Tsing-Ti’s accounts, the Pope is poignantly ridiculed and described as a priest-king and a sorcerer, who claims he can forgive more sins than people can commit. He even claims that he can open the gates of paradise for people who are willing to pay

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<sup>75</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 75.

<sup>76</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 10.

for the toll and the tariff.<sup>78</sup> With respect to British people's response to the conduct of this sorcerer and his clergymen, the Chinese emperor says: "The English, I suspect, are too humane, too generous, too contemplative, to countenance or endure so hideous an imposture."<sup>79</sup> Toward the end of their discussion about the contemporary Christianity in Europe, the Chinese emperor calls the Christian clergymen "ruffians"<sup>80</sup> as they show no holiness and they seem to concern more about the prerogatives of their churches than their obligation to the people they serve.

As for the chaos of British politics, Landor suggests that letting the "hereditarily wise" to work in the government was one of the reasons which caused the political disorder. He attacked the practice of allowing the aristocrats to pass their titles of nobility from generation to generation, which was in a sharp contrast to the spirit of fair competition observed in the Chinese civil examination. Regarding the inheritance of titles, Tsing-Ti observes that:

Tsing-Ti: In England the *hereditarily wise* constitute and appoint a somewhat more numerous assembly, without which they can not awfully seize any portion of what belongs to the citizens, nor prohibit them from raising plants to embitter their beverage, nor even from heating their barley to brew it with. . . . the clergy are all appointed by the *hereditarily wise*, and the people are obliged both to listen to them and to pay them, whether they like it or not; nor can they be removed from their places for any act of criminality.<sup>81</sup>

Questioning the nature of this practice, the Chinese emperor says

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<sup>78</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 5.

Emperor: The kings of England do this? they reward the children for being begotted by clever fellows? and never for making them? Now indeed may we believe that the soles of their feet are opposed to the soles of ours. Didst thou tell me they delegate to their servants the granting of distinctions to worthless men? . . . Well then may the English be called regicides, for he who lowers the kingly character spills the most precious blood of his king.<sup>82</sup>

Landor's appeal was later embodied in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report in 1854, in which an open examination scheme was proposed to recruit new members of the civil service. This proposal was further brought into practice in 1870.<sup>83</sup>

At the end of the last conversation, Tsing-Ti is invited to his Italian servant's house, where the general manners of the British are mocked by Tsing-Ti and his Italian servant.

I could not but compare their [Italian] manners with the French, very greatly to their advantage, and fancied that even the English might

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<sup>82</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 26. With regard to this criticism on the practice of title inheritance, John Barrow also noted that the Chinese's astonishment and puzzlement about this consuetude. When a Chinese secretary was sent by Qianlong to write down, using both Chinese and Manchu languages, the names and titles of the people in the English portraits, which were parts of George III's presents for Qianlong, the secretary was bewildered by the fact that a noble title were granted to some young figure appearing in the portraits. On the difficulty of explaining this custom to the Chinese secretary, Barrow observed that "But here a more serious difficulty occurred than that of writing the name. The rank was also to be written down, and on coming to the portrait of this nobleman, (which was a proof impression of the print, engraved from a picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when the late Duke of Bedford was a youth,) I told the Chinese to write him down a *Ta-gin*, or great man of the second order. He instantly observed that I surely meant his father was a *Ta-gin*. I then explained to him that, according to our law, the son succeeded to the rank of the father, and that with us it was by no means necessary, in order to obtain the first rank in the country, that a man should be of a certain age, be possessed of superior talents, or suitable qualifications. That these were sometimes conducive to high honours, yet that a great part of the legislative body of the nation were entitled to their rank and situation by birth. They laughed heartily at the idea of a man being born a legislator, when it required so many years of close application to enable one of their countrymen to pass his examination for the very lowest order of state-officers." See Barrow 114-15.

<sup>83</sup> See Peng Jinpeng's "Cong ying mei deng guo wenguan zhidu fazhan taolun woguo kaoshi zhidu gaijin fangxiang" [Civil Service Developments of UK and U.S.: The Implications for Taiwan Examination System Reform] *Guojia jingying jikan* [National Elite Quarterly] 1.3 (2005): 39.

learn something from them. Certainly the islanders are thick-rinded and rather sour. . . .

“If my master were an Englishman, he would feel it his duty,” said Van Ni; “for Englishmen threw you, bound hand and foot, among the dogs.”<sup>84</sup>

Here Landor satirizes the British people’s temperments as “thick-rinded” and “sour,” while their way of treating other people as inhumane. If we put these negative comments with Landor’s other condemnations on contemporary British religion and politics together, we will be able to see that the Chinese are somewhat depicted as an idealized “other” in order to mirror the social evils and injustice of the British society. In other words, both China and the Chinese are consistently beautified as an idealistic “Other” in order to satirize the author’s own country and fellow countrymen.

Nevertheless, Landor also attributes some negative images to the Chinese. For instance, he suggests that the Chinese eat animals that the British would not consider as food. He says:

I have walked by the side of a canal in the vicinity of the capital, and I have seen rats, cats, dogs, very delicate sucking kittens, and the tenderest plumpest puppies, and even fine long snakes, green and yellow, of several pounds each, enough to give an appetite to an opium-eater at day-break. I have seen them, sire, killed upon the banks, without a man or a woman or a child to guard them: and I have waited in vain, for hours together, in the hope of making a contract for a quota of the stock, the proprietor never appearing.<sup>85</sup>

This passage may sound like a compliment to the honesty of the British people, but it is actually an ironic attack on the dietetics of the Chinese.

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<sup>84</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 79-80.

<sup>85</sup> Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 28-29.

## F. "Imaginary Conversations between Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti" and *Citizen of the World*

A number of scholars have already pointed out the similarity between Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" and Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762) in terms of their narrative strategy of having a foreigner comment on British society.<sup>86</sup> However, except for this similarity, none of them have gone further to discuss other possible resemblances that might be observed in both works.

Yet, both writers have chosen Chinese figures as their mouthpieces to satirize contemporary British society; and both protagonists, Tsing-Ti and Lien Chi Altangi, are well-educated Chinese intellectuals who have extensive knowledge of the English language.<sup>87</sup> As both writers intend to use their works to criticize their own country and society, they tend to idealize the images of China and the Chinese as an "Other" and imply that China seems to be a better place, a quasi-utopia, to live in.<sup>88</sup>

However, if we take the individual historical backgrounds of these two works into consideration, Landor's work, comparatively speaking, seems to be a more unusual attempt. When Goldsmith published his *The Citizen of the World* in the mid eighteenth century, China was enjoying her time of peace and prosperity and her government and politics were considered by several leading European intellectuals

<sup>86</sup> See Dawson 34, 206; Elwin 297; Ge, *Zhong ying wenxue guanxi* 81; Super 273.

<sup>87</sup> The protagonist of *The Citizen of the World*, Lien Chi Altangi, used to be a mandarin who learned the English language by frequently conversing with British merchants in Canton. As all mandarins in Qing China are supposed to pass certain literary exams before they are granted civil positions by the emperors, it therefore explains the literary background of Lien Chi. As for Tsing-Ti, he was educated by the late emperor, as a companion of his son, the successive Emperor, and he has studied the English language from his early youth and he could speak the language fluently and correctly. See Goldsmith, *The Citizen* 27; Landor, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, 1-2.

<sup>88</sup> Dawson indicates that both Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* and Landor's *Imaginary Conversation between the Emperor of China and Tsing-Ti* belong to the literary tradition of Mandeville and Polo, in whose narratives a kind of "Chinoiserie craze" is clearly evident between the lines and China is tend to be depicted as a prosperous utopia to contrast with Europe. Dawson further explains that writing of this tradition often "creates an idyllic picture of a Utopian China to point a satirical comparison with unsatisfactory conditions in the writer's own country" (34). Though gradually vanished since the nineteenth century, relics of this tradition can still be perceived in works of a few British writers even in the twentieth century, such as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson's *Letters from John Chinaman* (1901). See Dawson 32-34.

as a better-governed land than most European countries. Therefore, most of Goldsmith's images of the Chinese are compatible with the ones mentioned by the eighteenth century European intellectuals, especially those from France, who believed that the Chinese were worthy for the Europeans to imitate and consequently encouraged their fellow countrymen to do so.<sup>89</sup> But, when Landor published his "Imaginary Conversations" in the early nineteenth century, voices favouring the Chinese were rarely heard in Britain, let alone seeing the Chinese as a model for the Europeans to emulate. In Britain, especially after members of the Macartney Embassy (1792-94) published their diaries, itineraries and sketches, in which many unfavourable things about the Chinese were noted: such as their backward and slow developments in science and technology, their ignorance of the world and their autocratic monarchy,<sup>90</sup> fewer and fewer British intellectuals believed the old florid stories about China and the Chinese.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> For instance, both Francois Quesnay (1694-1774) and Francois-Marie de Voltaire (1694-1778) have given favourable comments on Chinese agricultural development, laws, morality, politics, religions and suggest the Europeans to imitate the Chinese in these aspects. For abstracts of their comments, see He Zhaowu and Liu Yulin eds., *Zhongguo yingxiang: shijie mingren lun zhongguo wenhua* [Chinese Image: World Celebrity on Chinese Culture], vol. 1 (Guilin: Guangxi Normal UP, 2001) 46-72.

<sup>90</sup> When the mystic veil on China, covered by early European travellers and thereafter Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, was gradually lifted by British visitors in the eighteenth century, especially after Anson published his *A Voyage around the World* in 1748, George Staunton and a number of his fellow members of the Macartney Embassy their diaries and itineraries at the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, more and more unfavourable descriptions were applied by British writers to picture China and her people. Among them we find Samuel Johnson's fragmentary comments, George Staunton's *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1797), John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804), George Gordon Byron's *Don Juan* (1818-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Hellas, A Lyrical Drama* (1821), and Thomas De Quincey's *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822). For a complete list of British writers who tend to place China in a negative light in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Ge, *Zhong ying wenxue guanxi biannian shi* 64-81.

<sup>91</sup> On this change in European intellectuals' reception of Jesuits' stories, John Barrow (1764-1848), a comptroller of household to Lord Macartney's embassy to China, offered a possible explanation. He said: "These religious men, however, might have had their motives for setting this wonderful people in the fairest point of view. The more powerful and magnificent, the more learned and refined they represented this nation to be, the greater would be their triumph in the event of their effecting a change of the national faith. It may also have occurred to them, that common prudence required they should speak favourably, at least, of a nation under whose power and protection they had voluntarily placed themselves for life. There is every reason to suppose, that in general they mean to tell the truth, but by suppressing some part of it, or by telling it in such a manner as if they expected it would one day get back to China in the language of that country, their accounts often appear to be



To sum up, Landor depicts the Chinese as a civilized and courteous people who enjoy religious freedom. They are, in contrast to the British, more amiable and tolerant. Their country is administered by an intelligent and kind emperor and a body of capable officials who have shown their competence and knowledge in the civil examinations.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

#### I. A review of the study

From this survey of the British and Chinese works from the 1750s to the 1840s we can see that the reciprocal images of the Chinese and the British are very much like two kaleidoscopes. The contents of each kaleidoscope (such as the people, the political systems, and the social traditions of individual countries) bear no distinctive marks of changes over the years, but as different viewers look into the kaleidoscope from different perspectives, the images vary, and may well be different if one viewer observes the same contents at different times. It is because one may decide to change one's perspective in response to the changes of the circumstance. For instance, Anson and Bell offer an example of how the Chinese can be viewed so differently by two contemporary British visitors. There is barely anything positive attributed to the Chinese in Anson's account, while in Bell, the Chinese are often depicted favourably.

As for the second instance, Wolcot's poems and Lin Zexu's works are examples of how a writer may view the Other differently at different times. In Wolcot's earlier references to the Chinese, they are usually depicted with favourable terms. Wolcot even identifies himself with Emperor Qianlong because of the latter's poetic gift. However, in his later works, his attitude towards the Chinese is contemptuous because the British embassies were twice humiliated by the Chinese court in 1794 and 1816. In his early reports about the opium smugglings to Emperor Daoguang, Lin criticises the British bitterly, which, to a certain degree, reflects the collective attitude of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, after he came into contact with the British in Canton, he changed his impressions of them bit by bit

and started to make distinctions. He also avoided using biased terms to describe the British in his writings and began to consider them as humane and sensible as the Chinese. He even encouraged his own countrymen to imitate the British to improve the condition of their daily life. Hence, if we may borrow a set of terms from mathematics to interpret the kaleidoscopic images of the Chinese and the British from the 1750s to the 1840s, we can see that the contents are very much like constants, while the individual observers are variables. It is mostly the changing attitudes and ideologies of individual authors, rather than the perceived people or societies, that result in creating such varied reciprocal images of the British and the Chinese. When the observers turn the tubes of the kaleidoscopes in their hands, the images also change accordingly.

## **II. A summary of Chinese images of the British from the 1750s to the 1840s**

Possibly being mistakenly identified as the Portuguese<sup>1</sup> and the Dutch, who had commercial conflicts and military skirmishes with the local Chinese in Canton and Macao on a regular basis, the earliest Chinese impressions of the British tended to be quite unfavourable. Besides, there was no British missionary serving in the court to give the Chinese an alternative image of the British and most of the British in Canton and Macao were either merchants or sailors, who won little respect from the local Chinese. Many British merchantmen were accompanied by warships for security reasons when they visited China. This intentional or unintentional display of military force often made the Chinese feel uneasy and led them to regard the British a potential threat. Hence, the British visitors were often depicted as a crafty,

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<sup>1</sup> In the sixteenth century the Portuguese were described by the locals of Canton as a special variety of goblin who bore superficial resemblance to human beings and who might come from a cannibalistic ancestry. As they did not follow Chinese manners, they were often associated with animals by the Chinese. Some Chinese author even suggested that the Portuguese behaved like human beings only when they were in a happy mood, but when they lost their temper their beastly nature would prevail. See Fok 144.

dishonest, disobedient, unethical and valiant people in many Chinese official documents since the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this type of negative depictions of the British was not the only ones available during the early interactions. A small number of liberal-minded Chinese writers still endowed the British with neutral or even positive images. For instance, in Chen Lunjiong's "Daxiyang ji" [A Note of the Great Western Ocean, 1730] and Fu Heng's *Huangqing zhigong tu* [Sketches of Tribute-bearers to Imperial Qing, 1751], the British are generally considered as humane as the Chinese and attributed with several positive characteristics, such as chastity, courteousness, intelligence, refinement, and their country powerful and well-governed. Therefore, generally speaking, before the nineteenth century, the Chinese official images of the British did not change dramatically and they continued to bear more positive characteristics than negative ones. Nevertheless, since the British force started to cause trouble in the south-eastern coast of China in the early nineteenth century, more and more unfavourable images were attributed to the British. This change of winds more or less reflects the pragmatism of Chinese government's impressions of foreigners.

There were also two types of images of foreigners in Chinese literature. In works finished by those who have experience of associating with the British in a friendly manner or who were willing to study cultural differences between the Chinese and foreigners open-mindedly, the British were usually depicted positively. They are generally described as civilized, enthusiastic, hard-working, helpful, humane, intelligent, law-abiding and sensible. This phenomenon suggests that these Chinese intellectuals did not have any prejudice against foreigners or consider their own culture superior to all foreign ones. Instead, they suggested that some foreign cultures might be used as models to improve themselves, particularly in the aspect of science. Nevertheless, after the British exposed their colonialistic

intentions by sending troops to invade Canton and Macao in the early nineteenth century, the Chinese intellectuals changed their impressions of the British overnight. Their patriotism gradually surpassed their rationality and fewer Chinese writers were willing to attribute any more positive characteristic to the British. In their works, they usually emphasized the vicious deeds done by the British in China rather than their cultural achievement in Britain. The British were often depicted as behaving like animals or ghosts, who showed little or no humanity at all. As a result, their images of the British became a mixture of positive and negative elements. They suggested that the British were superior in science, but inferior in humanity.

Second, following the concept of *imaginaire social*<sup>2</sup> that every image of an Other is more or less conditioned by its immediate milieu, Pageaux suggests that:

The influence of historical and political factors on representations of “Others” should not be underestimated (the century-long confrontation between France and Spain is one of the examples). This perspective of research makes us to emphasize the inseparable relationship between literary analysis and historical studies in a broad sense as well as how historians’ so-called “long length” factors may influence the studies of literary and cultural images. That is to say, an image may not correspond to the immediate politics, histories or cultural facts. However, it is closely related to the cultural phenomenon of a specific period of history.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, no imagological study should be done without considering the historical

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel-Henri Pageaux defined it as a society’s collective imagination of an “Other.” Jean-Marc Moura added that it is a collective interpretation of another group of people or culture that is made by members of a society. It is a dualistic (identical/different) [identité/altérité] interpretation and it usually interrelates to specific periods of history. See Daniel-Henri Pageaux, “Xingxiang” [Image], trans. Meng Hua, *Bijiao wenxue xingxiang xue* 157-58; Jean-Marc Moura, “Shilun wenxue xingxiangxue de yanjiushi ji fangfalun” [L’Imagologie Littéraire: Essai de mise au point historique et critique], trans. Meng Hua, *Bijiao wenxue xingxiang xue* 24.

<sup>3</sup> Pageaux, “Xingxiangwue lilun yanjiu: cong wenxueshi dao shixue” [A Study of Imagological Theory: From Literary History to Poetics], trans. Kuai Yiping, *Bijiao wenxue xingxiang xue* 197; Pageaux, “Recherche sur l’imagologie: de l’Histoire culturelle à la Poétique,” *Revista de Filologia Francesa* 8 (1995): 135. See appendix 4 for the original text.

contexts of an image. An image of the Other is not only a literary phenomenon, but also a testimony of a historical moment as well. This therefore suggests that when a similar political or cultural circumstance emerges again, people may search their warehouse of images and then adopt an old image to describe the new Other. Based upon this suggestion we can see that though many positive images of the British withered after the first Opium War began, they were not completely extinct. As evidence suggests, when the Opium Wars ended in 1860 and the Qing government started to launch its Westernization Movement in 1861, many positive images were attributed to the British again. Likewise, we can see that when the illegal British merchants and sailors started to cause trouble in the early nineteenth century, some Chinese writers immediately adopted former negative images for the Huns in the Han Dynasty to describe the new trouble-maker. Hence, the image of an Other is very similar to a perennial plant in terms of its nature. When the climate is right and the soil rich, it flourishes; however, when the climate is not suitable for it to grow or the soil turns into barren, it goes into hibernation and waits for its next chance to germinate again.

In the early Chinese accounts of the British, particularly those written by the local intellectuals of Canton and Macao, most writers emphasized the cultural difference between Britain and China and favoured their own culture. Whereas in the later works, such as those of Ye Zhongjin, Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan, many writers emphasized the superiority of British military force and suggested that China might be preyed upon by the British. This change reflects how the Chinese intellectuals were gradually losing their confidence in the superiority of their own culture and military power. After admitting that the British material civilization was superior to theirs, their own spiritual civilization became the one and only thing that they could possibly be proud of. Hence, more and more writers liked to dehumanize or

demonize the British by associating them with animals with negative images or even ghosts to suggest that the nature and characters of the British were inferior to those of the Chinese. It is in this shift of focus that many Chinese intellectuals find a way to psychologically compensate the humiliation they suffer from losing the war to the British.

The diversity of Chinese images of the British reflected a constant adjustment of their attitude and mentality at different times. When the British appeared friendly and peaceful, they were generally considered as civilized and humane and their exotic customs appreciated, but once they revealed their aggressive commercial and military ambitions, they were considered by the Chinese writers as enemies, whose characteristics often bore the marks of non-humans, such as animals, demons or ghosts. Besides, this survey also suggests that though the Qing government did not recognize the British government as an equal power before the end of the Opium Wars, the Chinese ruling class did not necessarily despise the culture of the British or negate their humanity. The British were mostly reckoned by the Chinese as an Other with a different but equal cultural potentiality.

### **III. A summary of the British images of the Chinese from the 1750s to the 1840s**

This study suggests that China and the Chinese were often used by British writers as exotic references to either satirize or praise their own society or even their own country as a whole. Hence, just like the Chinese images of the British, there are also two major types of images of the Chinese in the works of the British writers: positive and negative. In most British travel accounts about the Chinese and their country published before the first Opium War,<sup>4</sup> the Chinese were often depicted as

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<sup>4</sup> The travel accounts I am referring to include George Anson's *A Voyage round the World* (1748), Aeneas Anderson's *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China in the Years 1792, 1793, and 1794* (1795), and George Staunton's *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to*

an arrogant, conservative, greedy, imperious, insolent, savage, stubborn and superstitious people, and their country run by an autocratic, conservative, corruptive and stagnant government. On the one hand, it was because most of British visitors' personal experiences in China were unpleasant and many of them considered themselves humiliated or unfairly treated by a less civilized people, who knew little or nothing about the power of Britain in other parts of the world; on the other hand, it may have been due to their disappointment at finding the Chinese were not as civilized or friendly as had expected. As suggested earlier, there were a number of fundamental fallacies embedded in these expectations. Many early British visitors to China failed to recognize the fact that many early positive accounts of China, such as the stories of Polo and Mandeville as well as the reports of Jesuits, were likely exaggerated and unfaithful. Moreover, when early British visitors arrived in Canton and Macao, most of them merchants and sailors, most of the Chinese they met were either the local custom officials or merchants, who usually had bad communications with foreigners and often treated them rudely. It is therefore of little surprise to see that many early British visitors tended to form unfavourable impressions of the Chinese. Even so, a British sailor named John Meares (c. 1756-1809) reminded his fellow countrymen that:

If we were to form our opinions of the general character of the inhabitants of China from those who inhabit the banks of the Canton River, it would be doing them a great injustice. A trading sea-port, which offers little or no other communication than with Custom-house officers, brokers, and the inferior rank of tradesmen, does not qualify the voyager to judge of the nation to which it belongs; but, forming our opinion from those who have had opportunities of visiting the interior parts of China, we are disposed to believe that the Chinese are liberal, enlightened and polished people, and that they profess themselves of



such a character. It cannot therefore be supposed, if an Ambassador was sent to China from this country, with all the appropriate accompaniments of such a character, that he would not be received with suitable respect and dignity.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, most of the British visitors still preferred to regard Canton or Macao as a microcosm of China and the citizens they met there as typical of the Chinese elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Meadres' warning somehow explains the phenomenon that if a British writer had consulted the early travel accounts about China written by their own countrymen, such as those of Anson and Macartney, he would have been less willing to give the Chinese a positive comment in his works.

There are some specific characteristics in British images of the Chinese from the 1750s to the 1840s. First, in terms of the British travel accounts about China and the Chinese, the more high-ranking Chinese officials the visitors met, the more likely they would depict the Chinese positively. Let us take the accounts of Anson, Bell, Anderson, and Macartney as examples and see how differently China was depicted by them. Both Bell and Macartney had many chances to meet people of higher social ranks in China, such as the imperial officials and Chinese emperors, and were well received by the Chinese government, hence their images of the Chinese tend to be more neutral or positive. Whereas in the cases of Anson and Anderson, both military officers barely had any chance to know the Chinese officials of higher ranks and they often focused their observation on the military strength of China due to their professional instinct. As a result, they commented negatively on the military power of China and considered the Chinese inferior to the British in

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<sup>5</sup> John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Year 1788 and 1789, from China to the North West Coast of America* (London: 1790) lxxv.

<sup>6</sup> See Qiu Ye, "Magaerni shituan fanghua qianxi de san bu youji" [Three (British) Travel Accounts Published before the Macartney Embassy Visits China], *Zhonghua dushu bao* [China Reading Newspaper] 21 Jan. 2004 <<http://www.gmw.cn/01ds/2004-01/21/10-5f8d084d7c6c075f48256e22000bef5.htm>>.

every aspect. Furthermore, as some travel accounts were repeatedly cited by literary writers for either adding local colour to their works or supporting their own arguments, many literary works consequently were indebted to earlier travel accounts. For instance, De Quincey borrowed many negative comments from Anson to support his unfavourable depiction of the Chinese, his image of the Chinese therefore mirrors an inter-textual relationship with Anson's work. To a certain degree, De Quincey revived Anson's negative images of the Chinese.

Second, if we compare the Chinese images presented in the British travel writings to those in the British literary works, it is more likely to find negative ones in the former than in the latter. On the one hand, this is because those people who visited China in the early days were mostly given specific commercial or military errands and consequently their evaluations of China were often based upon their assessments of the economics and military strength of this country. As China was obviously inferior to Britain in both aspects, those early visitors naturally looked down upon the Chinese and depicted them negatively. On the other hand, many of the British literati of this period, such as Goldsmith, Carlyle and Landor, intended to use China as an idealized Other to criticize the social evils of Britain. As a result of this intention, they tended to create beautiful or idealized images of China and the Chinese to offer their readers an alternative picture of them.

Like what we have seen in the works of the Chinese writers after the first Opium War broke out, this study suggests that the number of negative images of the Chinese in British writings also gradually increased after the British government launched the Opium War. While Chinese writers compared the character and nature of the British intruders to animals, demons or ghosts, a number of British writers also started to defame the Chinese. They frequently compared the Chinese to uncivilized or semi-civilized savages and their country to a primitive society where

seemed to show no sign of improvement or progress. British caricaturists and pamphleteers ridiculed not only the ethnic characteristics of the Chinese, such as their pigtailed and bound feet, but also their dietetics and food. In terms of their historical and social significances, on the one hand, the negative images of the Chinese offered the British public a psychological compensation as their people were not duly treated in China; on the other hand, they also somehow justified the reason why the “civilized” British needed to launch a war against the arrogant Chinese as it was probably the only way to change the Chinese government’s contempt for Britain.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

One of the aims of the thesis is to indicate that neither the Chinese nor the British had a unified image for each other from the 1750s to the 1840s. Instead, during this period both the British and the Chinese writers have created or reproduced various images of the Other to meet their different needs at different times. The basic principle of the image construction in travel accounts and imaginary works can be roughly summarized as follow: in travel accounts, if a visitor is well received in a foreign land, his or her representation of the foreigners as an Other is more often than not neutral or favourable. For instance, the British are positively presented in Xie Qinggao’s travelogue, so do the Chinese in John Bell’s work. However, if a visitor thinks that he is maltreated by the people of the foreign land, he is more likely to produce negative impressions of the foreign land and people. For instance, considering himself being unduly treated in China, Anson barely has anything good to say about the Chinese. In literary texts, when a writer wishes to defend the value of the domestic society, the Other is usually depicted negatively to suggest the superiority of the Self. Wolcot’s later attack on China and

De Quincey's anti-Chinese pamphlets are examples of this type. In contrast, if a writer wishes to ridicule the social evils or injustices of his own country, the Other is usually depicted positively to illustrate a writer's disappointment or dissatisfaction in domestic society. Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, Carlyle's "On Heroes" and Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" all bear this intention.

As mentioned earlier, every image of an Other is like an organism and it survives only in an appropriate social-political milieu. Hence, the change of a milieu may lead an image of Other to extinction or hibernation. If we study the ecological significance of images of the British and the Chinese from the 1750s to the 1840s, we will see that some images were repeated regularly in different discourses over a period of time, while some only had short lives. For instance, the early neutral image of the British as a civilized people was rarely seen in Chinese texts in the mid-nineteenth century because the relationship between the two countries deteriorated; likewise, the early positive image of Chinese emperors was barely mentioned by British writers at all after the first Opium War broke out. Nevertheless, some works do not conform to collective ideologies of the writers' own societies and tend to express opposite views. Works of this type normally favour the Other and criticise or ridicule the Self, particularly the domestic social evils or follies. They are usually anti-ethnocentric and more self-introspective. In my survey, Carlyle and Landor's panegyric of the Chinese and Wei Yuan's works all bear this spirit to different degrees.

In this thesis we see that the reciprocal images of the Chinese and the British have gone through certain changes from the 1750s to the 1840s, a time when the relationship between China and Britain shifted from peaceful to hostile. The thesis finds that neither the Chinese images of the British were as unfavourable as many scholars suggested them to be, nor the British images of the Chinese were

completely negative since the 1750s. Instead, this study suggests that the reciprocal images of the Chinese and the British of this period were not unanimous at all. It is due to the contribution of those non-ethnocentric writers who used China or Britain as an idealistic “Other” to criticize or satirize their own domestic societies. Their nonconformity to the *imaginaire social* reflected the critical function of literary works. Likewise, by studying the ethnocentric works we can see how superior the writers perceived themselves to be and what kind of social value or ideologies they wished to defend or promote.

## Appendix

### 1. Les images de l'étranger appartiennent au réseau des représentations

fondamentales d'une société: tout groupe constitue son identité par un partage et un rejet. Désignation et description de l'étranger permettent ainsi au système social de s'affirmer en tant que système, autrement dit de se former en se refermant.

(Jean-Marc Moura, "L'imagologie littéraire et mythocritique: rencontres et divergences de deux recherches comparatistes," *Mythes et littérature*, ed. Pierre Brunel, Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994. 134.)

### 2. Dans le récit de voyage, l'écrivain-voyageur est producteur du récit, objet

privilegié du récit, organisateur du récit et metteur en scène de sa propre personne.

Il est narrateur, acteur, expérimentateur et objet d'expérimentation, mémorialiste de ses propres faits et gestes, héros de sa propre histoire sur un théâtre étranger dont il se fait l'annaliste, le chroniqueur et l'arpenteur privilégiés. Il est surtout persuadé, parce qu'il est voyageur, qu'il est un témoin unique. Or, le voyage n'est pas seulement un déplacement dans un espace géographique ou dans le temps historique; il est aussi un déplacement dans une culture, celle qui regarde. On ne «voit» l'étranger qu'avec les outils emportés dans ses bagages (culturels). (Daniel-Henri Pageaux, "De l'imagerie culturelle à l'imaginaire," *Précis de littérature comparée*, eds. Pierre Brunel and Yves Chevrel, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1989. 156.)

### 3. L'image est une représentation individuelle ou collective où entrent des éléments à

la fois intellectuels et affectifs, objectifs et subjectifs. Aucun étranger ne voit jamais ît. C'est dire que les éléments affectifs l'emportent sur les éléments

objectifs. . . Images sont mythes ou mirages,--ce dernier mot exprimant bien l'attrait irrésistible qui éveille et qui excite notre sympathie, indépendamment du contrôle de la froide raison, parce que cet attrait n'est que la projection de nos propres rêves et désirs. (Brunel, P., Cl. Pichois, A. ~M. Rousseau, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature comparée?*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1983. 64.)

4. Nous voudrions mettre en avant l'importance considérable, le poids des données historiques et politiques dans l'élaboration de la représentation littéraire de l'étranger. . . Cette proposition nous amène à souligner l'indispensable liaison entre analyses littéraires et travaux historiques, au sens large du terme, et à privilégier dans l'étude des images littéraire et culturelles ce que les historiens nomment la longue durée: l'image ne coïncide pas avec les réalités politiques, historiques, culturelles du moment, pas forcément en tout cas; mais l'image est toujours en étroite relation avec une situation culturelle historiquement déterminée. (Daniel-Henri Pageaux, "Recherche sur l'imagologie: de l'Histoire culturelle à la Poétique," *Revista de Filología Francesa* 8 (1995): 135.)

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